

DRONES AND AMERICAN SMART POWER

International Hierarchy and the Policing of Risk

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the impacts of drones in state-level relations between the Obama administration and Middle Eastern states. Using a Foucauldian approach to security, which asserts that ‘the state’ exists as a set of practices that defines the border and the population of ‘the nation’, drones are examined through the Obama administration’s ‘Smart Power’ approach to foreign policy. In the discourses of many high-ranking officials within the administration, drones exist as a way for the American government to balance the withdrawal of military operations in the region while appearing to reduce the influence and impact of terrorist organizations. Because the United States discourses appear to be the authoritative, and therefore exclusively legitimate, voice on drones, the victims and persons who live under surveillance become excluded from important conversations about their continued use.

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Introduction

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, more commonly referred to as UAVs or drones, have become entrenched in discourse about American foreign policy. Well over a decade since the 9/11 terror attacks, the American government has continually sought retribution against al-Qaeda and its operatives as part of its fight against the sources of global terror. In his 2014 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama emphasised the declining role of the American military in the Afghanistan and Iraq rebuilding efforts originally laid out by President Bush (Obama 2014). While Obama said that America's struggle against al-Qaeda was nearing an end, the reality of terrorism was not going away. Rogue individuals, al-Qaeda sympathizers, and extremist Islamic groups have all been identified as potential threats by the United States government that must be addressed. At the same time, the newly elected Obama administration had to manage the country through the severe economic depression of 2008 while it sought to implement healthcare reform that would affect millions of Americans. In an effort to engage the Middle East while ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration increased the use of UAVs, a controversial weapon that makes it easier to track and eliminate terrorist threats. While there has been very little said about drones in an official capacity by the Obama administration, they are nonetheless an important element of the American security apparatus and their continued use has significant implications as more states seek to develop and implement the technology. This thesis argues that the use of UAVs, in American efforts to harmonize relations with the global security community, undermine the credibility of American intentions. In particular, this thesis presents drones as tools that reinforce harmful hierarchical relationships between the United States and its Middle Eastern allies, despite the Obama administration claiming the opposite, especially with respect to its so-called "smart power"

approach to foreign policy. Official discourses on drones justify and present the benefits of the technology, but the profound silence surrounding drones limits legitimate discussion and shuts-down important debates over their use.

The use of UAVs is not a new phenomenon. Originally used as target practice during World War II, drones were never fully integrated into the American military apparatus until after 9/11. The Israeli Defense Forces used drones in the 1970's and 1980's to confuse their enemies and to learn the location of anti-air defense infrastructure (Chamayou 2015: 27-28). Even then, drones were used as surveillance and intelligence-gathering tools and have only recently become weaponized. Beginning with the 'War on Terror', drones gained new significance in their ability to track, monitor and strike clandestine targets hiding in remote regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Under the Obama Administration drones have featured prominently as part of the American counter-terrorism strategy of targeting threats while gradually reducing the reliance on manned aircraft or 'boots on the ground'. In 2002, the United States spent approximately \$550 million on drones, while in 2011 that number increased to \$5 billion (Lorenz et al 2011). This investment in drones demonstrates the value that the American government has committed towards their role in future conflicts.

Not only are drones used prominently by the United States, but because of their increasing presence and apparent effectiveness other states are pursuing the development of their own UAVs (Parsons 2013). Because of the low cost of drones in comparison to other manned vehicles or military infrastructure, as well as the idea that globalization will increase the spread of technological innovation to smaller state sub-groups, drones are often considered to be the hallmark of the next generation of international conflict. However, as Gilli and Gilli argue, drones "will likely remain a prerogative of very few countries" due to the infrastructural support

and organizational challenges that go along with drone technology (2014: 4). Thus, while one can expect the use of drones to increase, they will remain under the control of states with significant military and technological structures already in place. How drones figure into the international system, then, has significant impacts not only as states are working to develop their own, but more importantly on how they affect those states that cannot support the technology. As the United States develops and enforces their drone program internationally, they reinforce their position and their sense of security atop a security hierarchy that leaves the people of many Middle Eastern states increasingly vulnerable.

Much of the literature on drones focuses on three aspects of their role in international relations. First, the extent to which drones create ‘collateral damage’ – that is, kill civilians rather than military targets – has been explored in depth and has been at the forefront of public debate. Because of the sparse information from the American government, websites such as The Long War Journal and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism report contradicting evidence of drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Both activists (Benjamin 2013; Rand 2012, 2014) and academics (Holewinski 2015; Bergen and Rowland 2015) call for greater accountability from the government with regards to how targets are selected and how innocent civilians are protected.

The selection of targets relates to the second theme that surrounds drones: their legal status as tools of war and foreign policy. In 2013, UN Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson recognized the “imperative that appropriate legal and operational structures are urgently put in place to regulate [the use of drones] in a manner that complies with requirements of international law...” (2013: 2). Within the guiding principles of just war theory, the “principle of distinction lies at the heart of the ... concern with disciplining – but not eliminating – war” (True 2015:

287). However, assessments of drone strikes in terms of their legality “is not merely a tactic to appease a networked global public” but also a “supplement to war-fighting by acting as a ‘force multiplier’” (Grayson 2012: 121). While established legal norms and principles can be used to protect civilians, they can also be used to justify their deaths as unavoidable aspects of war. Thus, new and transparent processes concerning the use of drones in conflict need to be made (Rosen 2013; Enemark 2011), but cannot completely satisfy an understanding of drones.

The third aspect of drones that is often discussed is their niche in a trend towards automated warfare and the reliance on technology to fight wars. Singer (2009;2015) argues that technological innovations that appear to come from science fiction “are frequently misunderstood, especially because they are frequently presented as ‘silver bullet’ solutions” (2015: 216). Furthermore, drones are often understood to create a ‘PlayStation mentality’ wherein the threshold for targeting and killing combatants, when viewed through a television screen, is lowered to a level where killing becomes convenient (Cole et al 2010). This idea has been thoroughly debunked (Martin 2010; Lara 2012; Chamayou 2015), but it stands that conflict has changed to rely (either in actuality or on perception) on the collection and application of information about one’s enemy (Arkin 2015; Rothenberg 2015). Thus, the apparent race to develop and implement drone technology (Blair and Helms 2013) needs to be weighed against the practical and ethical concerns that go along with automated machinery (Byrne 2014; O’Connell 2015). Each of these approaches to drones are valuable, but fail to address the long-term impacts that drones have on state relationships. While they call for accountability and explanations of policy from the American government, each approach accepts drones “as is” in modern security culture and fail to assess the value attributed to drones by actors within state apparatuses and the effects on state-to-state relations.

Research Question and Theoretical Framework

The research question guiding this thesis project is: “How has drone technology come to be valued by the Obama Administration, and what effect does their use have on its relation with other states?” This question addresses how drones, predominantly used by the United States, have been constituted as valuable by the Obama administration. In addition to the focus on American security practice, this question recognizes that security is not a one-way action but instead a complex assemblage in which other states and non-state actors will react and adapt as the security environment changes. Much of the existing literature on drones question the legality and ethics of their use, but the focus here is on how drones are changing the practice of security between states and across borders.

Discourse analysis has become an increasingly valuable method of analyzing state practice in the past two decades. Explanations of international relations that seek truths and generalizations about how states will act based on evaluative theories of state practice leave issues of interpretation and identity formation wanting more (Hollis and Smith 1990: 66-67). Examining the discourse of actors is more than just examining what they say. Discourse constrains and enables what can be said and defines what counts as meaningful statements (Barad 2003: 819). That is, discourse dictates how particular phenomena matters. Such phenomena are not limited to those of actors, but also include the material elements conjoined with them. For Barad, materials and discourses “is one of mutual entailment” where neither can be articulated in the absence of the other (2003: 822). A discursive approach allows the researcher to understand how realities of international relations are created and sustained and how practices within that reality are allowed to happen (Doty 1993: 303).

The discourse analysis presented in this thesis focuses on the discourses of ‘risk’ used by the Obama administration. Building on the work of Ulrich Beck and Michel Foucault, this thesis

understands risk as not only the tangible threats that a state identifies but also the potential and imagined risks that state actors believe to be true. Understanding risk in this way creates a distinct perspective on the future as states will seek to avoid 'worst-case scenarios'. As explored in this thesis, drones serve two fundamental purposes for the Obama administration. First, they actively pursue the threat posed by al-Qaeda and other dangerous individuals and groups. Second, they assist in the smart-power strategy that the administration incorporates into its foreign policy that labels American independence from international institutions as economically and socially 'risky'. Understanding the role of drones in the world risk society (Beck 1992) is crucial to understanding their implications.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical foundations for understanding security practice through a discursive approach. Michel Foucault described the governing logics of societies as based on the production and maintenance of truths and expressions of power to legitimate a particular order. Building on this idea, which Foucault calls 'governmentality', practices of security can be understood as expressions of power relations across state borders which are themselves representative of particular identities. Understood as mutually constitutive practices that determine the 'same-ness' or 'other-ness' of different populations, security and identity must be conceptually linked. The state often serves as the determining factor for political identity and the relations of political subjectivity across large social groups. This chapter argues that contemporary security practices are established by the discourse of Western states, especially the United States, and have shifted towards the use of pre-emptive risk avoidance strategies and their management of risky populations.

Chapter 2 focuses on the American security experience under the Obama administration. Beginning with an explanation of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), this chapter argues that drones evolved as the 'weapon of choice' for the Obama administration based on a 'conceptual pull' for different engagement with the Middle East. Through 'smart power' diplomacy, the Obama administration actively distanced itself from the discourses and practices of the Bush presidency while attempting to cultivate a positive relationship with the Middle East and start anew in the international community. UAVs came to be valued as tools that found the balance between ensuring American security while preventing too much involvement in other state affairs. This chapter also explores the legal and ethical discourses that the Obama Administration uses to justify its controversial drone strikes. In particular, it focuses on the contrast between the limited discourses on drone strikes and the subjectivities imposed when silence becomes the dominant discourse.

Chapter 3 examines drones in the larger context of their role in war and combat. In particular, this chapter looks at how drones fit into what Shaw calls 'the Western way of war' and the impacts that it has on sovereignty and the spatial elements associated with war. Historically, Western states have increasingly relied on airpower not just to win conflicts but also to control and police populations in areas identified as potentially dangerous. Drones, in their use by the American government, are a continuation of a long-standing tradition that polices foreign populations to ensure American security. From the American perspective, drones are justifiable because of the 'risky' sovereign status of states where potential terror threats exist. In articulating the existence of these threats and silencing alternative voices, Western states led by the United States situate themselves at the peak of a hierarchy of security actors.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to understand the effects of drones in the American security regime over the course of Obama's terms in office. Although drones have come to be valued by the Obama administration in their "smart power" approach to foreign policy, drones continue to serve as a form of police power that reinforce established norms of international hierarchy. By remaining silent on drones, the Obama administration limits the 'legitimate' voices and necessary discussions that need to take place given the implications that drones have for those who fall under their gaze and their evident rise in security regimes across the world. In choosing to remain silent about American drone practice, the Obama Administration undermines its asserted values of "smart power" and harms attempts to restore relations with the people of the Middle East.

Chapter 1 – Biopolitics, Risk, and Security

Introduction

The increasing use of drones to monitor and strike at suspected terrorist targets is challenging the established norms of international conflict. Before fully understanding the discourses of the Obama administration on drones and how they affect the norms of international conflict and relationships between states, it is first important to establish the framework for security discourses. This chapter provides the theoretical foundation and relevant literature to better analyze the Obama administration's use of drones. Beginning with an explanation of Foucault's notion of governmentality, it is argued that Western governments act economically to ensure the well-being of 'man-as-species' instead of on the whim of a sovereign ruler. The result is a politics of identity: sovereign physical boundaries are constructed in conjunction with the constitution of 'the nation'. Identity and security are mutually constitutive concepts as notions of sameness and other-ness form the foundations of a population's security.

Governmentality and Security

Michel Foucault's contributions to security studies, as well as to academia in general, are vital to understanding the discourses of identity and security presented in this chapter. This section will summarize Foucault's analysis of the emergence of the population and the importance of the state in governing it. Foucault argues that an important shift in governance took place, beginning in the 18th Century, when the sovereign began to regulate their subjects instead of govern merely according to their own will and interest. This period, in which the modern state developed, involved the reconceptualization of the population as an *asset* to the state, and whose strength was seen to directly correspond to the strength of the state. As such, the life, and indeed well-being, of the population became an object of governance.

Over several series of lectures, Michel Foucault works to explain the power relationships that underlie the modern state. Power, for Foucault, is the way in which political relationships are created, sustained, and transformed. However, “power can in no way be considered either as a principle in itself, or as having explanatory value which functions from the outset” (Foucault 2008: 186). Rather than existing as an objective condition in a zero-sum game, power “exists through the production of truth” (Foucault 1980: 93). Truths are particular understandings of how ‘things should be’. Truths describe ‘normal’ interactions between people, institutions, and different communities. Power is expressed through the production of truths, where “individuals are the vehicles of power” as they simultaneously come under its influence and exercise it on others (Foucault 1980: 98). Foucault was focused here on how “...the exercise of power ... [is] regulated and measured in the person who governs” (Foucault 2008: 311). In effect, Foucault was working towards de-centering the state and its role in governance and instead sought to discover “how multiple bodies, forces, energies, matters, desires, thoughts and so on are gradually, progressively, actually and materially constituted as subjects, or as the subject” (Foucault 2003: 28).

Despite often eschewing analysis of the state as a coherent entity or concept, Foucault provided important insights about how the state transformed through the course of Western history. The old way of centralizing power in a sovereign was the wisdom of a monarch and how they “regulate and model government in terms of truth” (Foucault 2004: 311). Validated through what was often a religious or revelatory truth, a monarch legitimized their rule through the direct control of material objects, individuals, lands, and their possession of wealth. Rights for individuals were expressed in the limits of the sovereign, but ultimately the sovereign had the power to “take life and let live” (Foucault 2003: 241). In the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries, as mercantilism became less prevalent and persons became both the subject of rights and regarded as economic actors, Foucault argued that a new field of reference that could “preserve the unity and generality of the art of governing over the whole sphere of sovereignty” was created (Foucault 2003: 295). This field was civil society: “a body with so many heads that, while they may not be infinite in number, cannot be counted” (Foucault 2003: 245). Civil society, Foucault argued, exists in an independent, natural state. It is “characterized by bonds which are neither purely economic nor purely juridical” and develops a complex organic relationship between social bonds and government (Foucault 2003: 308). This merger of social bonds and government is what Foucault refers to as biopolitics, and governs man-as-species rather than man-as-subject. Securing the well-being of the citizens, not just the territory, the sovereign, or the individual, became the duty of the state.

Foucault’s analysis of the population and its relationship with the state is important: it provides a level of depth to the study of security that was previously lacking. Whereas the sovereign was once concerned with the security of the territory and the maintenance or accumulation of power over time, according to a biopolitical formatting of power the people of the state are not merely something to be ruled over. Rather, the population is something for which “we can identify the universal of desire regularly producing the benefit of all, and with regard to which we can identify a number of modifiable variables on which it depends” (Foucault 2007: 74). A population must be governed beyond the interest of the sovereign. It must be governed based on its own varying demands, inconsistent terms, and ever-changing conditions. Thus, the governance of a state and population becomes “a politics whose principle object will be the employment of a calculation of forces” to determine what is the best way to ensure the best interest of the population (Foucault 2007: 295).

The problem for a governing power is thus to implement mechanisms of security that will balance the competing needs within a population into a stable institutional structure. Governing around this “random element inherent in a population of living beings” is an impossible challenge for the sovereign (Foucault 2003: 246). Security becomes “a matter of taking control of life and the biological of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized” (Foucault 2003: 246-47). Governing becomes ensuring a level of manageable randomness, done through creating normalized behaviours to minimize risk and maximize benefit. The difficulty is in determining what the best benefit is, what is dangerous to a population, and what generates the most risk. Governmentality, a word Foucault uses to describe governing the population, is a unique form of power in which “the techniques and mechanisms by which forms of rule and subjectivities are produced, maintained, and transformed” (De Larrinaga and Doucet 2010: 9). Benefits are maximized through the production and reinforcement of truths, leading to the exclusion of harms to the overall population. By recognizing these truths and “[demonstrating] the economic advantages of political utility that derives from them in a given context for specific reason” one can understand how they permeate the overall population (Foucault 1980: 101).

For a better understanding of Foucault’s notion of governmentality, De Larrinaga and Doucet (2010) outline this economy of power into four distinct parts, of which the ‘population’ outlined above is the most important. The first is the milieu: the space in which a range of natural and artificial elements convene to become an object of government (Foucault 2007: 19). Second, within this milieu comes the action of the state as outlined above: circulation. Indeed, the role of government is to oversee the milieu and ensure that benefits to the population are maximized while negative consequences are kept to a minimum. However, circulation is dependent upon the

third part: contingency. The benefits to people are conditional upon events or elements that must be assembled “but whose combined outcome can never be guaranteed” (De Larrinaga and Doucet 2010: 6). Contingency should not be understood as ‘chance’ in the sense of randomness, but rather as a “complex discourse...about the knowledge of uncertainty” (Dillon 2007: 45). Contingency has become a facet of liberal society as “economic and political preferences...came to be regarded as contingent on...calculations of utility” (Dillon 2007: 46). Just as society is subject to events beyond its control, so too is it governed by the utility that individuals gain from the freedom that contingency allows them to have. The combination of these four elements – the population, the milieu, circulation, and contingency – is an economy of power that captures Foucault’s ideas on security. From this understanding, one can see that security is an ongoing process and has no definitive endpoint at which one can say ‘society is secure’. Security is a future-oriented process that must “[take] into account precisely what might happen” (Foucault 2007: 20).

Although Foucault consistently uses the state as a point of reference, he is adamant that the state itself is not a universal concept (Foucault 2004). Rather, he viewed the state as an emergent concept that is the product of “a set of practices and strategies, governmental projects and modes of calculation” (Jessop 2007: 37). Foucault’s analysis of the sovereign state raises an important question: if sovereignty is understood as a series of discourses and power relations that constitute a political authority how are territorial borders justified as the limits of sovereign powers? Indeed, appeals to the absoluteness of sovereignty substantiate the permanence of the state in light of the changes of government. Foucault’s deconstruction of the state into biopolitically-oriented practices asks the reader to understand how the sovereign came to be the authority over people and how it remains so. Thus, a Foucauldian approach to security is

articulated through discourses that reinforce norms, create subjects of security, and establish military practices to secure what has been created.

A Foucauldian approach to understanding security is valuable in understanding how drone technology has permeated international relations. In a biopolitical context, war is carried out on behalf of populations whose very existence is (claimed to be) at stake rather than in the defense of a sovereign power (Reid 2006: 29). Just as populations are mobilised and individuals participate in war through their connections with their populations, so too do they feel the effects of war. As the discussion of De Larrinaga and Doucet highlighted, the governmentalization of the sovereign state seeks to reduce negative effects while increasing positive outcomes. In Western Liberal democracies, where Foucault's ideas have the greatest resonance, quick and destructive weapons are meant to produce these results, demonstrating that there can be positive outcomes to war with little loss of life (for one side in the conflict) (Shaw 2002). However, before delving too far into the practice of security, it is important to establish how the subjects of security are positioned. In light of Foucault's analysis of power relations between populations, the modern sovereign state's significance seems to erode. And yet the state remains as the central practitioner of security among subjects who seem to be linked only by the territory in which they live. The following section will expand on the initial premise laid out by Foucault that the state retains its permanence through discourses of power and danger.

Creating Objects of Security

To protect and defend a state and its inhabitants assumes the possibility of a safe and consistent 'way of being' within its territorial bounds. This section of the chapter will argue that the creation of a national identity is central to the very idea of security. A state cannot determine that which is to be protected without a reliable foundation on which to base its claim to be the

practitioner of security. Having the capacity to produce a communal sense of unity is central to security and manifests itself in the identity of a nation-state. Further, this section will argue that in the process of creating that which must be defended, so too does the state create that which must be defended from. Understandings of the “self” and the “other” are mutually constitutive of one another and neither can be understood without the existence of the other. Thus, the discourses espoused by the sovereign create an identity for the population that is constituted through norm production, involving the affirmation of desirable attributes and the exclusion of that which is undesirable. Before turning to a discussion of how states practice security, it is first important to establish the role and performance of identity in the act of security.

The identity of a population is indeed a complicated matter. Identification refers to the naming process of subject-positions to which subjects attach themselves. That is, actors define for themselves (the subject) the label (the subject-position) that best reflects their unity. From a discursive approach, identity is a constructive process – one that relies on constructive articulations of what it means to belong and what it means to be different. This is not to say there are perfectly outlined identities: articulations of identity demonstrate fractures within groups as well as intersections with other groups (Hall 1996: 4). Identities are constituted within discourse, rather than created as a result of it. Identities, constructed and repeated through time, are often considered to express ‘being’. Rather, identities should instead be thought of as using the resources of history in the process of becoming. Discursive approaches to identity argue that identities are always in the process of formation, constructing an idea of ‘what we might become’ instead of ‘what we already are’. Furthermore, identity is formed through difference: a recognition of what a particular identity is not. Identity emphasizes “exclusionary practices, the discourses of danger, the representations of fear, and the enumeration of threats” to constitute

meaning (Campbell 1998: 70). Each identity has margins at which it closes to others. Therefore, one can view the construction of identity as coming from within groups as a result of “the outcome of exclusionary practices” linked with a dangerous other (Campbell 1998: 68). This closure is not a natural or primordial closure, however, but is instead a constructed limit on identity. Moving forward, the recognition of identity as a constructed phenomenon is important. Rather than as an accepted reality of human interaction, identity is constructed through discourses of ‘who we are’ and ‘who we are not’, which has implications at “an axiological level that proffers a range of moral valuations” that are implicit in understandings of foreign policy (Campbell 1998: 73). For the purposes of this thesis, an examination of America’s identity and how it relates to their foreign policy is conducted in chapter two.

Within the realm of international relations and security, one often speaks of the sovereign state as the container of power for populations. That is, the state has become the “identity” to which subjects, who are labelled as ‘citizens’ under the governance of the state, will attach themselves for security and in their relations with other political communities. Conceiving of the state as the supreme authority in global affairs has become a ‘natural’ discourse of IR. The ‘state’ is an established foundation and pre-given entity that exists to contain an already settled ‘identity’ (Campbell 1998: 62-63). Even though the state is “an intrinsically contested, always ambiguous, [and] never [a] completed construct”, the condition of anarchy between states necessitates the state’s sovereign existence (Ashley 1988: 231). Although one can theoretically dismiss the idea of the state, it is in the practice of governance that the questions of identity will inevitably arise. While such labels of identity carry with them notions of oppression and constraints, so too do they bring criticism and action (Hekman 1999: 16).

Indeed, the borders of states create conditions of possibility in that they create agency for particular populations (Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012: 780). From a Foucauldian perspective, the limits of power and authority undoubtedly go beyond the territorial lines that limit power according to conventional inside/outside models of international relations (Vaughn-Williams 81: 2009). However, it would be foolish to assume that the role of states is irrelevant in light of this fact. As bordered entities, states need to be understood as historically constructed and dense political practices that attempt to resolve the relationship between universality and particularity, self and other, inside and outside, across space and time (Walker 1993: 154). In order to pursue the supposed interests of a population, its parameters must be established so that meaningful action may be taken. In other words, “boundaries are a precondition for decision and action at the level of the constituted whole” (Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012: 779). Especially true for democratic states, sovereign identity serves the practical purpose of circumscribing state power.

However, this is not to say that conceptions of sovereign power that rest on notions of the nation-state are adequate in describing global power relations. Rather, as Foucault’s analysis suggests, the impossibility of locating sovereign power in a precise territory or group does not mean the collapse of sovereignty but rather a transformation of sovereign power (Caldwell 2004). Sovereign power exists as a moderator of logistical life: “a life lived under the duress of the command to be efficient,...to be positioned where one is required, to use time economically, to be able to move where one is told to...” (Reid 2006: 20). By promoting a logistical life, the regime in power is able to improve the life of the population as a whole rather than just that of the individual. Thus, the role of the sovereign becomes one of determining the exception. Sovereign power works to bracket out that which goes against the norm, that which works against the production of a desirable ‘good order.’ Because the sovereign relationship with the

population is constituted by a dynamic of exclusion, it is less a relationship of power and more a relationship of violence (Edkins, et al 2004: 4). Sovereign power actively attempts to legislate out resistance to the state and turns political life into “little more than the technologization and administration of life” (Edkins et al 2004: 11). In creating borders and limits of power, sovereign powers resort to violent means of exclusion in order to keep those limits. Sovereign power exists in a paradox: it must uphold the law as well as act outside of the law in order to substantiate it (Dillon 2004: 48). Indeed, if sovereign power is designated a necessity for political agency, then sovereignty also denies agency for those who do not fit within the confines of the norm.

One can say with confidence that while dependent on historical contexts, state identity is the outcome of exclusionary practices in which a secure “inside” is linked with a discourse of “danger” on the “outside” (Campbell 1998: 68). Foreign policy should not be considered as an action between states across frozen, pre-given boundaries, but rather as a process of creating boundaries that constitute the ‘state’ and the ‘international system’ (Campbell 1998: 61). Knowing that threats to a population can come from any unknown source, locating dangers on the “outside” or as coming from an external source serves a “particular interpretative and political function” (Campbell 1998:63). That function is to attempt to stabilize and secure a base from which a political identity can position itself. Externalizing threat assists in containing ambiguities in a state’s identity and limits the contingent factors it might find itself subjugated to. Threats exist outside of the unity that sovereign subjects subscribe to, therefore it is necessary for states, in order to remain sovereign authorities, to continually highlight that that dangers exist. Therefore, one cannot view security as an objective condition that can be achieved. Rather, security is a process that relies on discourses of similarity as well as danger. The state “[reveals]

itself to be the medium of a decisionistic power” in determining what is to be secured (Dillon 1990: 108).

Collective identities are important to the norms of international security and the established norms of war between states. The collective identity of the sovereign “stands opposed to the individualism of the rule of law” (Kahn 2013: 215). Indeed, the enemy of the sovereign is not killed as an individual but rather as an object of the collective they represent. As such, enemies of the sovereign are considered to be guilty by association, whereas criminals of the state are held as individuals violating the law of a state. This distinction is vital to the norms of war: it determines the status of combatants and more importantly designates non-combatants who are to remain out harm’s way. Acts of terror and the responses to them directly conflict with this established norm. The actions of terrorists take place “in the space and time of the enemy” and are “resisted by the corporate agency of the nation” (Kahn 2013: 218). However, terrorists are identified as individuals or groups but lack the recognized collective identity that their targets have. Their actions are presented as criminal rather than as normal acts under recognized international law. Thus, as Kahn notes, “we resist construction of a corporate enemy, even as we construct a corporate subject as the victim” (2013:218). With states, and especially the United States, finding themselves at war with criminals, the imaginative structure of legitimate international conflict appears to be undergoing a normative change.

As we have seen, critical theorizations of security show how it is both subjective and discursive. It is subjective because threats to ‘the nation’ vary depending on who comprises the population of that nation. It is discursive because these threats are articulated through the representations of those in positions of influence over others. Although the state functions as an agent through which populations gain agency, it ultimately deploys violence to exclude that

which is dangerous to a common identity. Rather than propose an alternative mechanism of viewing state authority, which would entail a radically different research project, this thesis will continue according to the premise that foreign policy is a process of clarifying boundaries of inside and outside and according to which populations are governed, rather than as stable, pre-constituted realms of identity. When identity and state politics are combined, one can see the state as an important historical concept. However, in the fight against terrorism and al-Qaeda, the state has undertaken a war against ‘criminals’ producing asymmetrical relations with opposing combatants in the conflict and adding a challenging dynamic of determining the status of those involved. Centered on the perception of risk, the asymmetrical politics which underpin the US drone program are explained in more detail in the following section.

Governing Risk and Insecurity

The previous section has argued that the construction of a national identity is a discursive practice that relies on both discourses of similarity as well as on discourses of danger. Further, it argued that the dominant role of the state in international relations states is related to the capacity of states to shape (national) identity and that which threatens it. However, conventional discussions of war involve states as the primary actor, but one can see that states are increasingly responding to violence by non-state actors with political goals. Viewing security as a subjective process, how do states identify and respond to the indeterminable power of and unconventional tactics used by the non-state based threats they face? While the state has the authority to say what is and what is not a threat, having a complete knowledge of threats is impossible. The inability to have enough or certain knowledge of where a threat comes from is problematic for states whose sole responsibility is to protect the populations that they claim to represent. States

will turn to methods of security that pre-emptively avoid risks, or to practices that seek to increase knowledge of potentially risky environments.

Ulrich Beck provides an analysis of the role of risk in governing structures that has become important to critical theorizations of security. According to Beck, there has been in a shift in the conception of risk from material reality to that which is “mediated on principle through argument” (Beck 1992: 27). Many dangers exist today, but there are also “projected dangers of the future” from which recovery would be impossible (Beck 1992: 34). In a risk society, “we enter a world of uncontrollable risk” as a result of the modernization of industry and technology (Beck 2002: 41). Beck’s theory goes beyond the identification of unknown risks and argues that it is the social awareness of risk that creates the new risk society. Risks are “politically reflexive” (Beck 1992: 21) and create “societies in which public debate and political conflicts are shaped by the awareness of irreversible risks and their impact upon the foundations of modern industrial societies” (Aradau and van Munster 2007: 8).

Furthermore, Beck argues that risk is a part of what he calls “reflexive modernity”. For Beck, modern industrial society has reached its climax and the new modernity is a “natural outgrowth of its success rather than any systemic crisis or contradiction” (Jarvis 2007: 25). The advancement within industrial society increases the individualization of society which in turn “detracts from the traditional sociopolitical institutions on which industrial society relies for its reproduction” (Jarvis 2007: 25). Additionally, the processes of globalization create a tension between the sovereign authorities of the state and the increasing number of non-territorially defined actors. Not only are risks understood domestically, but they are also experienced and caused by international factors. The problem, Beck argues, is that institutions of the state are ill-prepared and unable to combat the international problems created by domestic industrial success.

Thus, Beck contends, “world risk society is forcing the nation-state to admit that it cannot live up to its constitutional promise to protect its citizens’ most precious asset, their security” (Beck 2002: 48).

To say that a society comprehends the threats to it is nothing new. Rather than say that the threats a state faces have changed entirely, Beck’s argument is that the modernity of society has created conditions in which societies are incapable of defending themselves against technologically advanced risks. However, it is important to distinguish between different types of risks and how they are not only developed empirically but also experienced socially. There are three different kinds of risks that states conceive of: threats, unknowns, and unknown-unknowns (Krahmann 2011). Threats are those events which can be predicted. Certain stimuli will produce detrimental effects, so this causal sequence should be avoided through institutions designed to prevent them from happening. These threats exist in the present and their source can be clearly identified. Unknown risks exist in a probable world. While threats will cause harm, unknown risks may cause harm. In this sense, they exist in an aleatoric probability: despite complete ignorance, “one can still assign equal probability to each possible state of the world and then maximize expected utility” (Kessler and Daase 2008: 222). The third category of risk, unknown-unknowns, are “efforts to explore the future through imagination” (Krahmann 2011: 355). While unknown risks exist in statistical probabilities, unknown-unknowns exist in narratives of worst-case scenarios and imagined narratives of what could happen. Terrorists could invent new chemical or biological weapons that could harm civilians. The potentiality of such an event occurring is unlikely, but because it exists in a potential world it becomes a risk. Unknown-unknowns, or potential combined with uncertainty, add a dimension to security that is disengaged from experience but nonetheless a factor in securing the state.

The combination of the individualization of risk and the perceived plethora of threats reinforces the need for an authoritative presence that can reassure safety and security. As demonstrated previously, the risks individuals feel are subjective, culturally constructed, and based on imagined narratives of worst-case-scenarios. To be ‘at risk’ is to feel a diminished sense of responsibility for one’s own actions, a lack of direct agency over one’s destiny, and anxious about the unknown future (Coker 2009). Thus, there is increased demand for experts as knowledge becomes ever more valuable. However, in the absence of defined ‘knowns,’ the statements of experts become “increasingly politicized” and their “monopoly on knowledge becomes open to challenge” (Rasmussen 2004: 386). Despite the absence of knowledge about threats or reliably neutral experts, the state must provide reassurance to the people that their safety is guaranteed. Otherwise, as Shlomo Griner argues, “[global threats] undermine the credibility of political institutions charged with providing security” (Griner 2002: 150). States must not only assert themselves as knowledgeable about the threats to their populations, but also must practice strategies of security that demonstrate their capability in holding a position of authority.

The threat of risk “entails drastic prevention at the catastrophic horizon of the future as well as generalised and arbitrary surveillance at the limit of knowledge” (Aradau and van Munster 2007: 33-34). Governing through risk creates a special relationship with the future, wherein policies are enacted that actively seek to prevent situations from becoming catastrophic. The future has become decisional: states no longer seek juridical action after an event has occurred, but rather the avoidance of risk is administrative and defined through preventative policy (Aradau and van Munster 2007: 30). Persons, groups, communities, and events are considered dangerous prior to any phenomena occurring as administrative measures are

equivalent to juridical sanctions. Risk becomes what Foucault called a *dispositif* or “apparatus” of governmentality that accounts for the management of social problems in terms of their catastrophic potential (Bell 2011: 29). Michael Dillon argues that as Western societies have shifted from a *dispositif* of geopolitics to one of biopolitics, contingency has become the dominant field of social organization (Dillon 2007: 11). Thus, biopolitical governance requires constant attention to and recognition of the potential state of emergency that exists as a risk to a population. Territories and boundaries “become a locale for the endless watch on the becoming-dangerous of an emergent life” and their authoritative structures “provide the technologies, surveillance, and self-monitoring devices for the complex governmental regulation of biopolitical global flows of every conceivable lifelike formation” (Dillon 2007:17-18). In addition to responding to dangers to populations, states have become more reliant on precautionary practices in order to keep their populations secure.

In contemporary risk society, Amoore argues, “the relation of past, present, and future is reconfigured such that future uncertainty can be acted upon in the present, even when there is little or no knowledge of past instances or probabilities” (2013: 62). What matters is not the ability to prevent or predict a particular future, but rather the “capacity to act in the face of uncertainty, to render the gaps in what can be collected or known actionably” (Amoore 2013: 62). This differs from the notion of discipline in a biopolitical society. Discipline does not serve to prevent a phenomenon from happening but instead “[make] other elements of reality function in relation to it, in such a way that the phenomenon is canceled out ... “ (Foucault 2007: 59). Foucault argues that normalization suggests a norm and tries to get people, movements and actions to conform to this model (Amoore 2013: 65). But in a risk society one sees “a security apparatus that mobilizes specific techniques for deploying the norm to govern uncertain and

unfolding populations” (Amoore 2013: 65). Thus, the limits of risk society are not to achieve a state of security, a condition of safety, or to eliminate all risks. Instead, the modern risk society seeks to harness the energies and effects of the future in order to afford sufficient securability (Amoore 2013: 72). While states provide justifications that precautionary practices may protect the security of citizens, such practices do more to provide a state of comfort (whether true comfort or not) that citizens are secure.

Conclusion

This chapter has served as an overview of security literature that provides a context through which one can better understand the proliferation and use of drone technology as a practice of security. Identity and security should be understood as “dynamic intersubjective processes that are contextually contingent” (Grayson 2008: 25). For Foucault, subjects are created through the imposition of power from a recognized authority: the sovereign state. The state governs ‘man as species’ ensuring that positive attributes are added to society while negative harms are avoided or systematically reduced over time. In terms of national security, states “find themselves compelled to replicate the performative of identity and the corresponding performances” that legitimize them as authoritative actors capable of keeping citizens safe (Grayson 2008: 50). Pre-emptive and preventative security regimes have been implemented so as to assure populations of competent state actors. However, such actions should not be viewed as acts towards a ‘secure state’, but rather as demonstrations that the state is securable. Indeed, as Campbell suggests, securing the idea of the nation-state “requires an emphasis on the unfinished and endangered nature of the world” (1998: 48). These actions put an emphasis on difference, creating an “Us” who need to be protected from “Them”. This difference is based on fear of the unknown and on the belief that “foreign elements are capable of destabilizing the solid social and

interpersonal foundations that give rise to the Self ...” (Grayson 2008: 51). Grayson concludes that the performatives and practices that make these situations possible are a “boundary producing political performance” that are less about bringing people together and more focused on keeping them apart (2008: 52).

Understanding the practice of security through the lens of identity helps one to understand the role of drones in American foreign policy. Grondin argues that national security has been “the primary way in which the US understands its relationship to the rest of the world since 1945” (2010: 89). Managers of national security in the United States have decided that “whatever happens globally is of concern to the US” (Grondin 2010: 89). Such a perspective adds value to the examination of how the United States security regime adjusts to this role and how it decides to handle issues of national and global security. The result is a global security regime whose terms are dictated by American interests and policy. The following chapter examines how the Obama administration has adapted its national security strategy. In particular, it examines the role that drone technology plays in the administration’s implementation of a ‘smart power’ strategy.

Chapter 2 – Drones and the Obama Administration

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical foundations of risk as the basis for Western military operations abroad. This chapter examines how the Obama administration formulated risk with respect to the Middle East and previous administrations. It argues that UAVs have evolved as the weapon of choice for the Obama administrations but the emphatic use of the technology has undermined the policy goals of an administration that so desires to be a ‘smart power’. Drones need to be understood as products of social actors rather than as technologically independent objects. Since the early 1990’s, much discussion has taken place around the so-called “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) and the American quest for technological dominance and superiority. This chapter begins with an examination of what constitutes an RMA and ultimately demonstrates that technological innovation on its own is not sufficient evidence for a ‘revolution’ to have occurred. Rather, an RMA is a social activity that takes place within the parameters of strategy, politics, and culture. Thus, drones must be understood as objects through which the Obama administration expresses its conceptualization of risk.

The chapter then proceeds to understand how drones became incorporated into the Obama administration’s general approach to foreign policy. In differentiating his administration from that of President Bush, Obama was primarily concerned with rebuilding the United States’ economic status and reputation with nations outside of Iraq and Afghanistan. The Obama administration refocused their engagement abroad using a “smart power” strategy that involved a case-by-case understanding of events, reframing their relationship with the Middle East to be more tolerant and cooperative, and prioritized their counter-terror effort to exclusively disrupt and dismantle the al-Qaeda network (Klaidman 2012: 14-15). Underlying the new approach to

the Middle East was a tone of disengagement: too much involvement in the affairs of Iraq and Afghanistan had led to misperceptions of America's intent in the region and harmed diplomatic relations with the countries involved. Furthermore, having combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan were heavy financial and personnel burdens that the American public was no longer willing to accept. President Bush's strategy "was barely enough to keep from losing, but that was all" (Woodward 2010: 43). From the Obama administration's perspective, the United States needed to use its resources more effectively to combat the real threat of terror that al-Qaeda posed while also shift their focus away from the Middle East to remain economically competitive and diplomatically reliable (Gerges 2012: 15). By using drone strikes to eliminate targets, rather than deploy personnel on the ground, the Obama administration has been able to achieve these goals.

Perhaps it would be inappropriate, as Leon Panetta suggests, to call the Obama administration's approach a "drone program" as that would be "a little like calling World War I a 'machine gun program'" (Panetta 2014: 388). However, the use of drones to combat al-Qaeda and to disengage from a more involved program with the Middle East suggests that the Obama administration has a different and distinct conception of risk from previous administrations. On the one hand, the risk of terror attacks from al-Qaeda and its affiliates is a 'real' possibility that requires pre-emptive and preventative measures. On the other, too much risk-avoidance can be a perilous behaviour. Being over-involved in the Middle East prevents the United States from positively engaging with the rest of the world. This conception of risk, demonstrated through the remarkable increase in the use of drones by Obama, ultimately leaves Pakistan and Afghanistan as areas which must be 'managed' and engaged with at a distance. While much of this chapter focuses on the discourses of UAVs, it concludes by examining the lack of discourse from the

Obama administration. The lack of discourse and delegitimization of voices by the Obama administration severely limits important discussions about drones as the technology becomes more prevalent across the world.

Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs

Much has been written about the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs since the early 1990s and the dominant performance of the American military in the first Gulf War. Perhaps because of the overwhelming amount of literature on RMAs, it is rather difficult to pinpoint a particular definition of an RMA, examine their limits and instigators, understand their effects, and determine whether or not a revolution has actually taken place. One important distinction to make is that RMAs affect the character of war, and not the nature of war (Shimko 2010: 9). Whereas war is “organized violence threatened or waged for political purposes,” to understand behaviour beyond that is not to examine war (Gray 2005: 30). Richard Hundley notes that RMAs demonstrate a “paradigm shift in the nature and conduct of military operations that either renders obsolete or irrelevant one or more core competencies of a dominant player” and/or creates new competencies in other dimensions of warfare (1999: 9). Furthermore, it should not be assumed that RMAs “will entail equally radical changes across the entire scope of military operations” (Shimko 2010: 20). Some areas of the military complex may remain unaffected while others are completely transformed.

Technological advances are, though not always, important to RMAs. However, to say that the development of new technology fundamentally changes the nature of warfare would not be an entirely accurate statement. Writing in response to the Soviet observation of a “military-technical revolution” in the American military, Krepinvech argues that a revolution occurs when “the application of new technologies into military systems combines with innovative operational

concepts and organizational adaptation to alter fundamentally the character and conduct of military operations” (2002: 3). RMAs occur when new technology is combined with an adaptive organization that changes the approach and outlook of conflict. There can be a technological push where militaries are encouraged to use technology to achieve particular goals. Or, there can be a conceptual pull where the military demands technology to achieve stated results. Such changes may take place over decades, meaning that the revolutionary aspect of the RMA is the magnitude of the change itself and not the timeframe in which it occurs. Regardless, the implementation of new technology and innovation in military operations “[invalidates] former conceptual frameworks by bringing about a fundamental change in the nature of warfare” (Krepinevich 2002: 5).

Military innovation must be viewed as a “social activity hinging ... upon pockets of cooperative behavior ... aiming to alter organizational missions and activities in response to some strategic or operational need” (Tomes 2007: 11). Technology may prompt new strategy or operating practices, but RMAs are fundamentally rooted in the “gradual systemic alterations to how organizations fight” which may take decades to fully comprehend (Murray and Knox 2001: 185). Technology itself needs to be understood as a social process where “debate closes around dominant design, and not design efficiency” (Farrell and Terriff 2002: 13). This means that while technology may develop independently of social processes, its use is still moulded around its function in social space. For this reason “culture is particularly useful in explaining why militaries continue to act in ways that are incongruous with prevailing strategic and operational circumstances” (Farrell and Terriff 2002: 7). While militaries may be influenced by the development of new weapons, it is far more likely that strategy, politics, and culture interact with technology to bring about military change. As Lambeth argues, technological platforms are

“necessary but insufficient preconditions” that must be supported by “clarity of goals backed by proficiency and boldness in execution” (1997: 75). In order to understand an RMA, it is important to look beyond the weapon or communication systems involved and examine the culture that led to its introduction.

Bousquet (2009) categorizes the technological development of warfare into several categories. With the development of nuclear weapons and large war machines, Bousquet argues that Western militaries have become preoccupied with “informational omniscience and almost godlike certainty in military affairs” (2009: 127). Rather than accept the ‘fog of war’ as a universally present aspect of war, uncertainty and unpredictably are seen as conquerable “through the deployment of the proper information and communication technologies” (Bousquet 2009: 161). Not only are Western militaries, especially the United States, working to have full communication across great distances to ensure optimal effectiveness, so too are they attempting to have complete knowledge of the environments in which they operate. Since the Cold War, the United States has pushed towards having total information awareness across multi-theatre conflicts (Rose 2012). Ferris has noted that “faith in knowledge is central to [American] military doctrine” (Ferris 2008: 109). Marked by the goal of “dominant battlespace awareness”, the American military has actively sought “unprecedented flexibility of command” over a less-knowledgeable, less-capable enemy (Ferris 2008: 109). Success in military operations comes from having more control over the risks that the military faces.

The noticeable shift towards information warfare stems from the American success in the 1991 Gulf War. According to Shimko, the modern RMA must begin with an analysis of the wars in Iraq as they served as “turning points in military history” and “tested the American military’s ability to carry out the full spectrum of missions it [was] likely to encounter in the years ahead”

(2010: 25). Suffering from so-called Vietnam syndrome, the overwhelming victory in Iraq demonstrated that future wars would be “short, decisive, and ... over almost before they began” (van Creveld 2011: 331). With an increased focus on ‘effects-based operations’, the United States has increasingly sought to neutralise their enemies through simultaneously attacking multiple targets (Echevarria 2011: 157). Indeed, while precision-strike capabilities and information technologies theoretically demonstrate American military superiority, the on-going “counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have exposed the limitations in focusing on one grammar [of war]” (Echevarria 2011: 160). When compared to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, success in 1991 was more of an “elephant stomping on a worm” than a battle fought between equally capable opponents (van Creveld 2011: 336). While combat operations in Iraq have ended, the United States remains in combat operations in the Middle East. In addition to operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States is also involved in the global effort to dismantle and disrupt the terror group known as the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIS). The technological dominance of the United States is apparent, but emerging threats beyond al-Qaeda demonstrate that their enemies are evolving and capable of operating even under superior technology.

Seen through the revolution in military affairs, how the Obama administration came to value drone strikes will be made apparent below. Viewing technological advances as social processes sets a framework for understanding the discourses of the Obama administration. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to an examination of American discourses leading up to and justifying the use of UAVs in the Middle-East. As objects, UAVs are not exclusive to the Obama administration. Initially developed for target practice during World War 2, the United States began using UAVs in field operations in 1992 to monitor the positions of Serbian troops in

Bosnia (Williams 2010: 872). Predator drones were put into use following the events of 9/11 and “monitored events in Pakistan” (Williams 2010: 874). Drones quickly became the “most effective tool in getting at a variety of enemies operating in some of the world’s most inaccessible terrain” and the American government was very pleased with the ability to eliminate leaders of the Taliban and al-Qaeda without having to put American pilots at risk (Williams 2010: 877). Upon taking office in 2009, the Obama administration began the lengthy process of eliminating many of the Bush-era policies that defined their relationship with the Middle East, but drones remained as “the new administration’s weapon of choice” (Klaidman 2012: 23).

The Bush Administration and Liberal Democratic Values

Understanding drones under Obama begins with an understanding of counter-terrorism under the Bush administration. Bush’s discourse about the possibility of terrorism following the 9/11 attacks was significant for American domestic and foreign policy years after his departure from the White House. In addition to heightened practices of domestic surveillance, Bush authorized the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 in an attempt to eliminate future attacks on the United States as part of the ‘Global War on Terror.’ This section serves neither as a justification for these actions nor does it attempt to provide alternatives. Rather, understanding Bush’s commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the Middle East helps one to understand how his administration conceived of risk during his terms: that undemocratic, unstable regimes in the Middle East provided a safe-haven in which attacks on Western governments could be organized and carried out. Bush’s framework of risk is important as it builds the context to understand the Obama administration’s understanding of risk to the American people.

In the days following 9/11, Bush's statements suggested that his administration's actions would be the 'natural' response of what any free and democratic society would do. The President's speeches posed the problem of terrorism as one of unity and not one of policy (Murphy 2003: 613). The attacks carried out by al-Qaeda were against the core of American values, and "to be American was to be civilized [while] to be al-Qaeda was to be barbaric" (Murphy 2003: 621). These sentiments were reinforced through the projection of American citizens rebuilding New York City, waving flags, and by the demonstrable sacrifice made by many Americans in the months and years following the attacks. In many ways, 9/11 was framed so as to be experienced by all Americans, rather than those directly involved. In doing so, the President not only acted as the representative of the American people but he also "crafted our feelings" about the individual and collective mood towards the country (Murphy 2003: 620). By labeling the attacks as opposed to American values, Bush effectively created an ideological enemy against whom anyone could oppose; a strategy also used by Roosevelt and Churchill in previous global conflicts. The response to the 9/11 attacks was noticeably missing any mention of military or diplomatic response because in Bush's framing of events "we controlled our fate because of our character" (Murphy 2003: 623). Thus, critiques to the 9/11 attacks were limited to spirit and resolve, and not to practicality or efficiency, simply because that was how the President framed the official response.

Central to the American approach to the Middle East under Bush was the idea that "one of the root causes of Islamic extremism lies in the repressive nature of the regimes that populate the Middle East" (Hobson 2005: 40). The autocratic, theistic, or despotic regimes in the Middle East could not provide answers for the growing social and economic problems that many people faced, leading to a dramatic rise in Islamic extremism and anti-Western sentiments (Windsor

2003). Prior to 9/11, American foreign policy had supported such regimes while encouraging moves toward liberalization with the belief that regime stability in the Middle East abated American security concerns while fostering economic relations. Following the attacks, that approach had changed and Bush struggled to find a balance between relying on traditional allies to help combat al-Qaeda and changing the conditions that led to Islamic extremism (Carothers 2003: 91). Ultimately, the perceived value inherent to democracy was more important. Believing that “[the] world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder”, Bush began aggressively promoting a democratic transition in Afghanistan and Iraq (Bush 2003). In his 2005 State of the Union address, Bush believed that the example of democratic transition in Iraq would “bring more hope and progress to a troubled region, and thereby lift a terrible threat from the lives of our children and grandchildren ...” (Bush 2005) and “[inspire] reform throughout the Muslim world” (Bush 2005). The Bush administration had taken the bold and very controversial steps to enforce their vision of a democratic Middle East so as to ensure the War on Terror would be successful.

The moral framework established by President Bush immediately following the attacks was carried out for several years and its audience expanded beyond just the American population. Before carrying out the ‘War on Terror’, the United States needed to convince the world that theirs was a morally justifiable war that complied with international law. Richard Jackson argues that at every opportunity, the American counter-terrorism campaign was demonstrated as a moral struggle and an inherently good war (2005: 123). This was done first by claiming that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were defensive wars in response to 9/11. As defensive responses, the respective invasions would be permissible under international law since the terrorist organizations behind 9/11 were unwilling to negotiate. Such actions laid the

discursive foundations that armed conflict against terror was the “only way to defeat this kind of evil” (Jackson 2005: 139). Second, American officials continually emphasized that the war was “focused on bringing the terrorists to justice [and] ensuring that justice is achieved” (Jackson 2005: 127). However, a clear conception of “justice being achieved” was never presented, leaving the Bush Administration with a level of flexibility to present satisfying results on their own terms. This discursive vagueness provided a diverse range of actions to be pursued so long as they ultimately led to a ‘just’ conclusion. This discursive strategy used to justify the ‘War on Terror’ has not been exclusively carried out by the Bush administration. In fact, these grounds are used to justify almost all types of war. What differentiates the American ‘War on Terror’ is that “American self-perceptions preclude the conduct of war for any reason other than a truly just cause” (Jackson 2005: 151). Not only did the Bush administration, through arguing the inherent value of democracy, believe that the war would lead to beneficial outcomes, but they presented their actions as the morally necessary way to achieve their goals.

The American experience of risk was central to the Bush administration’s actions in the Middle East. In his analysis of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Clapton argues that “the explicit invocation of the concepts of globalised or de-bounded risk, prevention and precaution” were all invoked in conceptualising the danger Saddam Hussein posed to the United States (Clapton 2014: 107). The idea that Hussein *could* possess weapons of mass destruction and *might* use them against the United States or its allies was sufficient for the Bush to invade Iraq. The language used by Bush and his administration was conditional and not dependent on the actual threat posed by Hussein. The language was instead focused on the potential catastrophe the United States *might* experience. The security of the United States was the predominant reason for the invasion, and the promotion of liberal democratic governance was “very much a

secondary issue in the lead-up to the war” (Clapton 2014: 114). While stable democratic governments may have been beneficial to the Iraqi public and the Middle East in general, “it would also provide the conditions necessary to reduce the possibility of individuals adopting extremist ideologies and engaging in terrorist activity in the first place” (Clapton 2014: 117). That Iraqis would experience democracy was very much an added benefit to the ultimate goal of American security.

The Bush administration’s actions in the Middle East have important ramifications for the Obama administration. This is true not only in the practical limitations that two wars in the Middle East placed on the new president, but also in how Obama’s administration conceptualised risk. Not only had the American population become irate over the lack of progress in Afghanistan, but they were also outraged by the continued occupation of Iraq on the false grounds provided by Bush. The commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan had placed a heavy financial burden on the American government and affected the American populace’s trust and willingness to support their government. In a 2009 article, Niall Ferguson argued that the economic capabilities of a nation are directly related to the strength of a superpower’s national security. While rising debt may be of a less concern to smaller states, he says, in large states “interest payments eat into the budget, something has to give - and that something is nearly always defense expenditure” (Ferguson 2009). With an overstretched American military, the validity of wars fought on moral grounds with no foreseeable end became questionable. Furthermore, Paul Kennedy notes that in terms of relative power, the United States was severely declining while nations like China and India were steadily becoming stronger economies (Kennedy 2009). Kennedy offers the metaphor of a hiker: where strong hikers can carry heavy burdens for a long while, should they increase their burden (the Bush Doctrine), or should the

terrain change (rise of new great powers, international terrorism, failed states), then eventually “nimble, less burdened walkers get close, draw abreast, and perhaps move ahead” (Kennedy 2009). Further, the promotion of democracy in the Middle East through military means was actively harming American relations in the region and the rest of the global community. The following section seeks to understand the ramifications of the Bush administration and how the incoming Obama administration conceptualised risk upon entering the White House.

Smart Power, the Middle East, and the Obama Administration

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), led by Joseph Nye Jr. and Richard Armitage, convened a report before the 2008 presidential election intended to guide the next administration into reframing and re-establishing America’s presence in the world. The report, titled *CSIS Commission on Smart Power*, outlined several of the factors leading to the United States’ relative decline since the end of the Cold War and provided guidance on how to reverse this trend. Among the problems they identified were America’s isolation from institutions and agreements with widespread international support, their response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and broad perceptions of incompetence within the American government (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007). Their recommendation was for the country to develop a *smart power* strategy: a strategy that “means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power” (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 7). Part of the problem, they argued, was the over-reliance on military power and the Pentagon stepping into issues that can be better served by civilian institutions. By complementing the strength of the military with greater investments in soft power, “America [could] build the framework it needs to tackle tough global challenges” (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 5).

Central to the Commission's report was the need to reframe the practice of national defense. During the Bush administration, the security practices involved in the War on Terror came to define America's global engagement. Rather than exporting the traditional values of hope and optimism, the United States was "exporting fear and anger" (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 10-11). The United States "restricted access to visas and surrounded ... embassies with concrete barriers and barbed wire" and demanded that foreign nations adapt to the demands of American security protocols (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 20). As the perceived risk of terrorism became more pronounced the implementation of practices such as those above implied that non-Americans could not be trusted. In addition, counterterrorism measures "furthered the perception that [America has] abandoned legal norms with respect to interrogation, detention, and rendition" (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 33). Combined with the idea that nations were "either with us or against us", American national defense proved to be both an isolating and superficial policy choice for what is ultimately a complex problem. In adopting a smart power approach, the Commission believed in a restoration of the "values inherent in [the] Constitution, educational institutions, economic systems, and role as respected leader on the world stage" that had been lost in years prior (CSIS Commission on Smart Power 2007: 4).

Smart power became a central element of the Obama administration's foreign policy. In her confirmation hearings prior to becoming Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton made specific reference to the CSIS commission's report and the need to adopt a smart power strategy:

I believe that American leadership has been wanting, but is still wanted. We must use what has been called smart power, the full range of tools at our disposal – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural – picking the right tool or combination of tools for each situation. With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of our foreign policy (New York Times 13 January 2009).

[Smart power] is what the Obama administration and I will try to do. It is a recognition that it shouldn't be an either-or debate. Either we use military force and all of the strength and power that we have or we use diplomacy and development (New York Times 13 January 2009).

As the Secretary of State, Clinton was the chief representative of the American government abroad. In internalizing the ideas of smart power into her position, Clinton was making a deliberate shift in how America approached the rest of the world. Under the label of smart power, the Obama administration wanted to refocus the priorities of the United States away from an over-reliance on military strength and onto its role in international groups and diplomatic engagement. The shift towards smart power was evident on several occasions during Obama's first term and suggests serious reforms in how the United States related to Middle Eastern countries.

During the first year of his presidency, Obama gave two important speeches emphasizing America's new approach with the people of the Middle East. In a speech to the Turkish Parliament, the president said that both nations "are confronted by an unprecedented set of challenges" encompassing transnational economic crises, violent extremism, shortage of energy resources, and the persistence of conflict (Obama 6 April 2009). These challenges, in which "all nations have a stake", could only be overcome by working together and building on mutual interests (Obama 6 April 2009). Using the same sentiment a few months later in Cairo, Obama emphasized a "new beginning" between the United States and people of the Middle East. Obama stressed that:

Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners to it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; our progress must be shared (Obama 4 June 2009).

While not abandoning his “first duty to protect the American people,” Obama made it clear that the United States was not at war with Islam, but instead with the mutual threat posed by al-Qaeda and violent extremist groups (Obama 4 June 2009). Unlike his predecessor, Obama committed to defending America while being “respectful of the sovereignty of nations and the rule of law” and doing so “in partnership with Muslim communities which are also threatened” (Obama 4 June 2009). In both addresses, Obama reiterated the need for working with other nations to achieve mutually beneficial goals. His statements reflected the smart power approach of working with the international community and implied an American confidence in the capabilities of other nations.

Important to the Obama administration’s engagement with the Middle East was their counter-terrorism strategy. In inheriting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the perceptions among the people of the Middle East that the United States was at war with Islam, Obama had a daunting task in reframing how America could maintain and ensure its security in the region. In statements released to the public (including the speeches in Turkey and Cairo described above), the administration actively avoided the terminology that defined America’s engagement during the Bush era. Statements like “Global War on Terror,” “jihadists,” and “militant Islamic radicalism” were Bush’s preferred terms for al-Qaeda and its networks (Gerges 2012: 204). In their place, Obama explicitly focused on al-Qaeda and its operatives so that there would be no confusion over who their enemy was. In describing Obama’s approach to combatting al-Qaeda, chief counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan said that

... the President rejects an absolutist approach or the imposition of a rigid ideology on our problems. Like the world itself, his views are nuanced, not simplistic; practical, not ideological. He understands the complexities and many dimensions of the challenges presented by violent extremism (Brennan 6 August 2009).

Brennan added that part of the new strategy involved “a clear, more precise definition” of who the United States was at war with. Obama, Brennan said, would not be at war with terrorism because “terrorism is but a tactic – a means to an end, which in al-Qaeda’s case is global domination by an Islamic caliphate” (Brennan 6 August 2009). The new administration was clearly articulating their goals and avoiding the broad language used by President Bush that strained the United States’ relationship with the Middle East.

Furthermore, Brennan recognized the importance of non-military approaches to counter-terrorism. The military could be used to take down al-Qaeda and its allies and to “train and build up the capacity of foreign militaries and security forces”, but Brennan added that the use of non-military power could “demonstrate that seemingly intractable problems and legitimate grievances can be resolved through diplomacy, dialogue, and the democratic process” (Brennan 6 August 2009). While the United States should be concerned with the “near-term challenge of destroying al-Qaeda,” it also needed to confront the “longer-term challenge of violent extremism generally” (Brennan 6 August 2009). This meant enabling local governments and security forces to address their own security and using America’s “economic power to promote opportunity and prosperity” (Brennan 6 August 2009). Contrasted with Bush’s strategy of liberalization through regime change, Obama’s counter-terror discourse is less confrontational and recognizes that complex back-and-forth diplomacy is required for meaningful long-term success.

The 2010 National Security Strategy provided the policy behind the discourse that framed the administration’s approach to terror. Obama outlined his administration’s commitment to:

... disrupt, dismantle, and defeat [al-Qaeda] and its affiliates through a comprehensive strategy that denies them safe haven, strengthens front-line partners, secures our homeland, pursues

justice through durable legal approaches, and counters a bankrupt agenda of extremism and murder with an agenda of hope and opportunity (2010 National Security Strategy).

By focusing on al-Qaeda, Obama's counterterror policy recognized that successful military operations require defined enemies. The National Security Strategy recognized that the American military was key to maintaining national security but also argued that "[American] leadership around the world is too narrowly identified with military force" (2010 National Security Strategy). It goes on to acknowledge that the enemies of American security try to overextend military use which ultimately "drives wedges between [the United States] and those who share our interests" (2010 National Security Strategy: 18). To counter-act the reliance on military power, the strategy outlines that the United States is

...strengthening alliances, forging new partnerships, and using every tool of American power to advance our objectives - including enhanced diplomatic and development capabilities with the ability both to prevent conflict and to work alongside our military. We are strengthening international norms to isolate governments that flout them and to marshal cooperation against nongovernmental actors who endanger our common security (2010 National Security Strategy: 18).

The smart power approach to foreign policy and counter-terrorism practices is important not only in terms of how America presented itself to the rest of the world, but also in how the United States perceived risk. For Obama, the risk of a future terror attack was still present and the president was still committed to eliminating al-Qaeda and its affiliates. However, he was also committed to maintaining the United States' economic superiority and restoring America's relationship with the rest of the world. Through the lens of smart power, the new administration recognized they had a certain amount of control over the risk they faced: their actions caused reactions from other states, evoked sentiments from the people of those states who were affected, and helped form the attitudes of how Americans would be perceived in the foreign policy community. Where the Bush Administration believed that their ideals "would be carried out

through the application of America's overwhelming military superiority, with little role for international organisations and allies, and a disregard for international law and norms,” the Obama administration presented themselves as “smart power” committed to reinvigorating their leadership in the global community (Hallams 2011: 4). No longer would the United States take a “with us or against us” mentality in its relationships with other states. The new leadership was committed to presenting themselves as a government who was willing to work with its allies and provide support to other states to meet mutually beneficial goals.

Indeed, much of the Obama administration’s counter-terror strategy reflects the goals of smart power that were described above. However, there was not as much of a ‘clean break’ between the Bush era and Obama’s as the above discussion suggests. Obama inherited a ‘terrorism narrative’ that suggests the West is under the constant threat of an imminent attack that “has become institutionalized among policy makers, government officials, and the general public” (Gerges 2012: 207). While the President did end combat operations in Iraq on 31 August 2010, upon assuming office Obama increased the commitment to the war in Afghanistan and retained many Bush-era programs such as the Guantanamo Bay detention centers (despite a promise to close them) and the secret surveillance of American citizens (Gerges 2012: 212). The most controversial aspect of Obama’s counterterror policy, and the focus of the remainder of this work, is the increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles or, as they are more commonly known, drones. Obama’s relationship with the Middle East has been defined by the effects and perceptions of targeted strikes against al-Qaeda. The following section provides a brief background of American drone use in the Middle East (specifically in Pakistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas). Further, it argues that while drones are a demonstrably effective tool in combatting al-Qaeda, their increased use in favour of ‘boots on the ground’ treats the Middle

East as an area which must be managed because of the risk it poses but not engaged with in favour of other, more profitable regions.

Drones – “The Only Game in Town”

In the lead up to his inauguration, then President-elect Obama met with Richard Clarke, his campaign’s counterterrorism advisor, and both “agreed on the need for a more surgical strategy, one that focused on demonstrable threats to the United States, rather than a ‘mow them all down’ approach” (Klaidman 2012: 23). Days earlier, Obama had been briefed on the practice of using drones to identify and eliminate those suspected of plotting to carry out attacks on the United States.

Drones provide several advantages for counter-terrorism operations. First, the “defining characteristic of drones” is the distance they create between those being targeted and the ones operating the drone (Sifton 2012). From an operation center on a military base, most likely in Virginia or Nevada, drone operators are able to observe areas that are otherwise unreachable in conventional military operations. The distance created by drones allows for the operators to remain out of danger while still completing their objective in otherwise hostile areas. Not only do drones keep their operators out of harm’s way, but they can also be *force multipliers* that “improve effectiveness in combat without requiring more forces [and] enable commanders to accomplish missions with fewer forces” (Sanders 2002: 116). Because of their low cost to develop and build, drones are significantly less expensive than their manned counterparts (Sanders 2002). Indeed, UAV’s save on both the manpower cost and financial burdens that combat operations require.

In addition to their cost-saving benefits, drones allow for long-term surveillance of particular individuals or of areas considered to be risky. Because they are not manned, drones

can remain undetected above their targets for extended periods of time. The operators can watch the monitors in shifts, ensuring a “constant geo-spatial overwatch by the institutional eye” (Chamayou 2015: 38). With the power to have a constant gaze over an area, targets can be “visually identified, confirmed, tracked and positioned relative to other people and material objects in the complex spaces of everyday socio-economic activity” (Grayson 2012: 123). The constant presence of the drone makes it easier to track individuals and carry out *personality strikes* that eliminate high-profile individuals. For example, drones were used to identify, track, and eventually kill Anwar al-Awlaki, one of the chief recruiters for al-Qaeda. More controversially, though, drones are used to conduct *signature strikes*: “the targeting of groups of men who bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren’t necessarily known” (Klaidman 2012: 41). In this sense, drones allow the surveillance of and tracking of potential risks. In addition to tracking individuals, drones also monitor “patterns of life” and search for deviations from what is understood to be normal behaviour. Drones serve the practical function of tracking and eliminating known threats. However, in monitoring for deviations from expected normality, as Wall and Monahan point out, “these surveillance systems and their agents actively interpret ambiguous information that continuously defies exact matches or clear responses” (2011:240).

If the practice of using UAV’s in Pakistan and Afghanistan was so controversial, why did the new Obama administration not only carry over the practice from the Bush era, but dramatically expand its scope and use? In the context of ending America’s wars, it was important for President Obama to “make rapid and decisive progress in Afghanistan, and that requires neutralizing safe havens in Pakistan” (Plaw and Fricker 2012: 355). Even with the surge of troops in Afghanistan that Obama authorized, there was no demonstrable progress that the

pattern of insurgency in the area had been reversed (Plaw and Fricker 2012: 355). Drones quickly became a tool that allowed a reversal of this trend. In an address to the National Defense University in May of 2013, Obama defended the use of drones as an effective tool to combat al-Qaeda:

“Dozens of highly skilled al-Qaeda commanders, trainers, bomb makers and operatives have been taken off the battlefield. Plots have been disrupted that would have targeted international aviation, U.S. transit systems, European cities and our troops in Afghanistan. Simply put, these strikes have saved lives.” (Obama 23 May 2013)

In addition to killing high and middle-ranking al-Qaeda operatives, drones effectively assist in the disruption of al-Qaeda’s ability to plan attacks. While at one point operatives could openly gather to rally support, plot attacks, or train new recruits, “they can no longer do so thanks to the threat of drones” (Williams 2013: 176). According to Leon Panetta, drone strikes “are seriously disrupting al-Qaeda” and they are “having a very difficult time putting together any kind of command and control” (Panetta, quoted in Williams 2013: 180). Because drone strikes are an ever-present consideration for members of al-Qaeda, their own security concerns have impeded their ability to function. Not only are local populations less willing to protect them, but “insecurity and distrust [has grown] among al-Qaeda members” (Williams 2013: 180-81). Using drones to combat al-Qaeda successfully achieves the Obama administration’s goal of disrupting and dismantling the terrorist organization.

Drones have gained significant attention because of the questions surrounding the civilians who are killed alongside the intentional targets. Indeed, drones have the reputation of killing “hundreds of people, including scores of women and children” (Webb et al 2010: 32). In a comprehensive review of major Western news agencies, Bergen and Tiedemann present evidence that between 2004 and 2010 approximately 32 percent of those killed in American-led strikes

were civilians (2010: 3). In their analysis, they argue that much of the difficulty in determining who is and who is not a terrorist target is difficult because “it is often not possible to differentiate precisely between militants and civilians” (Bergen and Teidemann 2010: 3). Further, local government sources often claim that *all* those killed in drone strikes are militants, while conflicting reports from militants suggest that *none* of the those killed are among their ranks (Bergen and Teidemann 2010: 3). In a meta-analysis of several major reports on the victims of drone strikes, the Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic found that one of the major difficulties in reporting on casualties “is biased by the definition of the individuals to whom media reports cite for identifying the dead” (CLSHRC 2012: 15). Their analysis concluded that “beyond the children and named militant leaders, there is rarely enough information provided in media reports for an outsider ... to independently assess whether the use of ‘militant’ or ‘civilian’ label is accurate” (CLSHRC 2012: 17). Because the Obama administration has kept information regarding the process for identifying targets a secret, reporting on the victims of drone strikes is inherently ambiguous and relies on competing definitions of who is and who is not a ‘civilian’.

While not commenting on individual reports, the Obama administration has consistently argued that their targeting policies “comply with all applicable law, including the laws of war” (Koh 2010). The administration defended drone strikes from two fronts: first, that according to the laws of war their targeted strikes were justified and, second, that in choosing their targets they complied with the highest international standards. Similar to the Bush administration, Obama has argued that the war against al-Qaeda is one of self-defence:

“We were attacked on 9/11. Within a week, Congress overwhelmingly authorized the use of force. Under domestic law, and international law, the United States is at war with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their associated forces. We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war -- a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defence” (Obama 23 May 2013).

Because they viewed themselves as being at war, the Obama administration could rightfully target al-Qaeda and its affiliates because they were attacked first and are acting to prevent further terror attacks in the United States. As presented earlier, drones proved to be the most effective way of disrupting and dismantling al-Qaeda, and thus became the best tool to defend the United States from them. However, that drones are used is not the controversial question, it is *how* drones are used.

In a speech given to the American Society for International Law, State Department Legal Advisor Harold Koh presented the Obama administration as having principled engagement with the global community and that they were committed to following universal standards of international law. Making specific reference to targeted strikes from UAV's, Koh said that "great care is taken to adhere to these principles in both planning and execution, to ensure that only legitimate objectives are targeted and that collateral damage is kept to a minimum" (Koh 2010). Koh argued that those targeted were members of al-Qaeda, and therefore lawful targets under international law. He further said that because of their belligerent status, "a states that is engaged in an armed conflict or in legitimate self-defense is not required to provide targets with legal process before the state may use lethal force" (Koh 2010). Indeed, using drones to eliminate al-Qaeda worked within the Obama administration's framework of smart power.

And yet, despite the discourses of smart power and limited justifications for drones presented above, the silence surrounding the drone program remains strikingly at the forefront when thinking about the militarized technology. Because discourse "imbues subjects, objects, and the relationships among them with different [meanings]," the role of silence should not be undervalued in analyses of discourse (Grayson 2008: 14). Understood as more than just the

absence of sound, silence requires an “implicit reference to (the possibility of) speech, an intention to be silent, [and] an expectation of speech ...” (Schroter 2013: 22). As Schroter argues, silence as a communicative act “depends on an intention (to remain silent or to conceal) as much as on [an] expectation (of speech), which is moderated by relevance ...” (2013: 7). That is to say that to understand silence as a communicative device requires an understanding of the context in which that silence is experienced. In political discourse, silence “is also recognized as a tool, not only an effect, of certain strategies employed to achieve particular goals” (Jaworski 1993: 105). Maintained silence on particular issues is “a major political tool for control and imposing the status quo” (Jaworski 1993: 110). The lack of discourse on particular phenomena can be just as important as the official discourse that is presented.

The “policy of silence” that keeps the drone program a secret is consistently under pressure as awareness of its fallibility enters the public consciousness (Miller and Tate 2015). This silence is problematic for several reasons. While Obama administration officials argue the effectiveness of drones and the limited civilian casualties that come from their use, the lack of official information prevents accountability from being maintained and questions the legitimacy of the program. Official estimates on civilian deaths from the Obama administration “have been far lower than those given by research groups and journalists” (Worth and Shane 2013). In dismissing these reports as “wildly overstated”, not only is the administration “depicting the drone campaign as nearly impervious to error”, but they are also attempting to assert themselves as the authoritative voice on drone strikes (Miller and Tate 2015). Furthermore, “[t]he U.S. government has never publicly disclosed its own count of the number of deaths attributable to drone operations” outside of Iraq and Afghanistan (Miller and Tate 2015). By negating but not correcting the variety of emerging voices on drones, the Obama administration exhibits a

contradictory stance on who the public should trust. On one hand, the public is told to trust an administration that Obama asserted in 2013 would “facilitate transparency and debate on the issue” but has failed to provide measures of accountability that were promised (Obama 2013). On the other hand, the public is told by the same administration that they are being misled by the only information that they do see. Indeed, an aware public is put into an awkward position in choosing who and what to believe.

More importantly, the continued insistence by the Obama administration that drone strikes are effective at defeating al-Qaeda silences the voices of those who live under them. Smith notes that “certain interests ... are empowered by a discourse that purports to recognize truth” and “other interests are sidelined and thus disempowered” (2001: 46). Indeed, as Enloe argues, “no individual or social group finds itself on the ‘margins’ of any web of relationships ... without some other individual or group having accumulated enough power to create the ‘center’ somewhere else” (2004: 20). Groups or individuals that are in these margins have a distinct “lack of public power and [are] the object of other people’s power” (Enloe 2004: 21). In the case of drones, those at the margins are the victims of the ‘collateral damage’ that the American government says is inflated. The next chapter focuses on how American power is exercised over those under drones and the affect it has on state relations.

Conclusion

Drone strikes remain a controversial aspect of Obama’s foreign policy. While the information about drone strikes is limited, the Obama administration has justified their use on two grounds: that they work, and that they are legal. Using UAV’s has allowed the United States to access difficult terrains where foot soldiers cannot go and allow for the surveillance of dangerous and suspicious persons or groups. Al-Qaeda’s daily operations have been significantly

impacted since the increase in drone strikes. While targeting al-Qaeda's membership, the Obama administration has faced criticism for the lack of clarity in how they identify targets. Indeed, it remains vague how a civilian differs from an al-Qaeda operative. In light of this, the Obama administration has repeatedly said that their internal processes comply with existing international norms and the rules of war. Both of these justifications are consistent with Obama's smart-power approach to National Security: drones focus the United States' efforts on al-Qaeda and its affiliates while ensuring America's participation within existing diplomatic circles. Obama has made a concerted effort to separate his administration's policies from those of President Bush. Not only does the label "smart power" suggest that his predecessor's actions were "dumb", but it reassures the global community that the United States is committed to fostering better diplomatic relations with other emerging powers through responsible military actions and meaningful engagement with the rest of the world. Using drones provides a more "hands-off" approach to engagement with the Middle East, but also suggests that the Middle East needs to be 'managed' instead of supported. However, the lack of transparency and the continuing silence on drones may prove counter-productive as the public remains disengaged from the reality of conflict.

The Obama administration has changed the "War on Terror" in more than just a discursive way. For Rasmussen, war changes from a linear style proposed by Clausewitz to one in which sides "perceive the totality of the battlespace, and it is in this totality, the system of battle, which becomes the focus of strategy" (2006: 57). In modern RMA conflicts, the strategy of war is not to eliminate the enemy but to have an information advantage over your enemy. Such strategies "focus on creating contingencies that increase the scope of political and military action for oneself while decreasing the options for the enemy" (Rasmussen 2006: 63). So while traditional precision-strike weapons have travelled *through* space, drones make better use of

space in order to gain better information about their targets while waiting for the opportunity to strike (van Creveld 2011:221). However, the continued use of drones supports a monumental disparity in security discourses. This chapter has sought to position American security policy as the pre-eminent discourses of global security practices. Despite criticisms and demands for a transparent drone policy, the Obama administration insists on the public rectitude and effectiveness of the technology. The following chapter examines the implications of the continued use of drones in combat.

Chapter 3 – Drones and the Western Way of War

Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed the discourses and emergence of drones under the Obama administration, but an examination of drones is incomplete without an understanding of their effects on the assemblage of which they are a part. Drones, as material objects and actors, have an important role in international relations. Beginning with an explanation of how material objects operate within assemblages of power, this chapter argues that drones reinforce harmful state practices by marginalizing populations in 'riskier' states. State agency, often determined by Western states, has become conditional on their security capabilities. As Holmqvist asserts, political imagination is conditioned by spatiality and has significant impacts on the way in which political agency is created (2013: 229). As a result, states that are 'less sovereign' than others are relegated to a lower status in relative hierarchies of power. Drones are an extension of Western nations' history of liberal intervention in states where a sovereign presence is 'insufficient'. Based on Western conceptions of sovereignty, drones are 'permitted' in other states because their status as a risky sovereign makes violations of sovereignty legitimate. From the perspective of spatiality, drones are a continuation of the ongoing challenges to perceptions of territory and sovereignty. In this way, drones are a continuation of the 'Western way of war' in which Western states rely much more on airpower to achieve their security goals while increasing the danger for local populations. Thinking of drones as a part of the 'Western way of war' does not reduce drones to a military strategy. Rather, it stresses the political ramifications and power relationships that drones reinforce.

Traditional thinking in international relations has emphasized states as non-complex, closed-systems in which equilibrium, cyclicity and predictability take prominence (Acuto and

Curtis 2014: 7). Systems that are viewed as the sum of their parts rule out emerging properties such as those described above. Rather, the international system should be viewed as a complex system “composed of multiple actors, at a variety of spatial scales, that engage in complex interactions according to non-linear and networked patterns” (Bousquet and Curtis 2011: 51). Rejecting the linear approach, viewing states through the lens of complexity offers “the conceptual language and methodological tools for an age characterized by patterned global flows and the interpenetration of non-contiguous societies” (Bousquet and Curtis 2011: 48). For Deleuze and Guattari, complex systems are composed of dimensions rather than units (1987: 21). This is to say that such systems have “neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 21).

One way of thinking with complexity is through assemblages. Assemblage thinking “tends to push for the problematization of the ordinary and the deconstruction of wholes and totalities” (Acuto and Curtis 2014: 10). The elements of an assemblage are not stable and their configuration cannot be reduced to a single logic (Collier 2006: 40). Assemblage theory allows for the deconstruction of the structural elements of society while assessing how the individual parts contribute to the overall whole. Where terms like structure imply fixed points from which actors and elements pivot, an assemblage “is a network in which relations between elements are never fully contained by a set formation” (Holmqvist et al, 2015: 4).

One aspect of assemblage that requires greater examination is the role of material elements. For Marres and Lezaun, material elements operate in a sub-discursive manner where their “relevance to political process remains unacknowledged or at least under-articulated in public discourse” (2011: 494). Indeed while human actors interact with objects, human activity is never outside of the relation with material objects. Bennett argues that material bodies always

reside within assemblages and “its thing-power is a function of that grouping” (2004: 353-54). That is to say that “a thing has power by virtue of its operating in conjunction with other things” (Bennett 2004: 354).

Studying the material objects of society “looks at the co-productive relationship between the origins and everyday functioning of objects while tracing the transformation of their purpose and justification” (Mutlu 2013: 173). Mutlu identifies three stages of object analysis: emergence, continuity, and transformation (2013: 175). Emergence is the first moment an actant, an object that mediates between actors that act and systems that behave, is introduced into the network and co-produces the actor-network relationship (Mutlu 2013: 174). Continuity recognizes the stabilizing role of the actant, sustaining the relationship between actors and objects. Further, as conflict and discrepancies are natural in such a relationship, transformation of the system is inevitable. In understanding the role of drones in international relations, it is important to remember that “any given technical objects [are] always inserted into broader assemblages that determine its mode of production, the value attributed to it, and its distribution and employment in the social field” (Bousquet 2014: 95). That is to say, drones do not have an inherent presence in the social world. Instead, drones were created with particular abilities to serve a particular purpose which has changed variable to the needs of social actors. But, at the same time, social actors can be enveloped by technology as the objects themselves contribute “to shaping the social field and reorganizing the various entities that are connected to it” (Bousquet 2014: 93). So rather than viewing technology as changing the ways in which states practice their security, or vice versa, the relationship between the two is a dynamic coevolution (Bousquet 2014: 93).

This chapter seeks to understand how drones are used in and affect the complex assemblages of the international state system. Within international society, sovereign states exist

in hierarchical relations guided by the logic of risk outlined in Chapter 1. While not always negative, hierarchical relationships are the result of reinforced understandings of sovereign power, security practices, and international policing. Understood through the ‘Western Way of War’, drones are an extension of American sovereign supremacy over weaker and more vulnerable states. Drones, like other forms of aerial weapons before them, are utilized not only as tools of war but also as tools of policing that enforce domestic order through quick and decisive punishment. Not only do drones reinforce ‘acceptable’ state practice, but the American legal justification for drones continually silences opposing viewpoints from the populations who live under them.

Territory, Sovereignty, and the Hierarchy of States

Within the study of international relations “the desire for linearity, predictability, exactitude and scientific knowability” has fostered a political imagination along clear and physical spatial lines (Holmqvist 2012: 223). The result has been a centering of the territorial nation-state within contemporary accounts of international relations, including discourses of security and conflict.. However, as Agnew argues, thinking of authority as the exercise over a particular territory “reflects the concept of sovereignty that emerged from Westphalia and then developed along with the Enlightenment and Romantic ideals of popular rule and patriotism” (2005: 456). For Murphy, “understandings of sovereignty have evolved and changed” from pre-Westphalian city-states to multi-layered sovereignty regimes with territorial bases (1996: 87). Agnew further asserts that this conception of sovereignty “hides more than it reveals”, as “many governments continue to act as if the concept is actually descriptive of the contemporary world” (2005:456). Instead, Agnew says that “we do not live in a world that is singularly imperialist, globalist, integrative, or Westphalian” but a combination of different hierarchical relationships

between states (2005: 456). Despite the evolving nature of sovereignty that Murphy suggests, “new questions are being asked about the scale of political-territorial organization” as sub-state and super-state actors are becoming more involved (1996:110).

Krasner argues that states that experience poor governance or failure are burdened by many problems:

“infrastructure deteriorates; corruption is widespread; borders are unregulated; gross domestic product is declining or stagnant; crime is rampant; and the national currency is not widely accepted. Armed groups operate within the state's boundaries but outside the control of the government” (Krasner 2004: 91).

While such problems persist, the right to sovereign governance based on self-determination remains. Jackson argues that “what has changed is not the empirical conditions of states but the international rules and institutions concerning those conditions” (1990: 23). Former colonial states “have been internationally enfranchised and possess the same external rights and responsibilities as all other sovereign states” despite their apparent lack of political will, institutional authority, and organized power to protect human rights (Jackson 1990: 21). These ‘quasi-states’ are empowered by ex-colonial self-determinations that “has led to a new kind of territorial legitimacy and the freezing of the political map in much of the Third World” (Jackson 1990: 24). The international system “fostered the independence of such states and caters to their survival and development” (Jackson 1990: 25). Sovereignty is fundamental to contemporary international society, but is at the same time vulnerable “when the nation-state appears to be in conflict with more basic cultural projects” such as human rights or security practices (Strang 1996: 45).

So-called failed or failing states have caused un-ignorable problems for more powerful states. Particularly in advanced democracies with engaged electorates, humanitarian crises have “created no-win situations for political leaders who are damned if they intervene and damned if they do not” (Krasner 2004: 94). State security, while normally considered a domestic matter, becomes a matter of international concern because of the danger of transnational actors. Thus, as Mitchell argues, the geopolitical scripting of combat “has moved from a Cold War conceptualization of security attained through effective spatial containment, to an idea of security won through effective spatial administration” (2010: 289). Aggressive and authoritarian states no longer exclusively pose a threat to state security. So, too, do those states that appear chaotic and ungoverned (Mitchell 2010: 295).

According to Holmqvist, “leading quantitative research programmes depict war as being necessarily tied to the state” and conflicts outside of this paradigm are not considered ‘conflict proper’ (2012: 225). Knowing that al-Qaeda does not represent a particular state, American operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan clearly do not fit into state-centric accounts of war. Furthermore, the American security presence and use of drones in these regions appears to be a clear violation of recognized state practice, namely the recognized sovereignty that governments have over particular territories. Not only does this conflict expose the gaps in the legal framework governing the conduct of armed conflict, but it also calls into question the absolute presence of sovereign right in international affairs (Daskal 2013).

Assuming that sovereignty is an indivisible concept has harmful effects on studying how states function in relation to one another. Viewing sovereignty as dynamic and evolving rather than as an inviolable aspect of state relations helps to challenge the prevailing understanding of sovereignty in world politics. While sovereignty itself has become a contingency for many, that

sovereignty has not been eliminated entirely for those states under the watch of Western states signifies its continued importance. Lake argues that relationships between states are, just as relations between people and their governments, power relationships understood through the lens of authority (2009: 62). Hierarchy understood here is a “dyadic relationship between two polities that varies across pairs within any system from complete anarchy to full dominance” (Lake 2009: 61). That is, authority is not exercised system wide but rather exists on a spectrum between participants who willingly enter into relationships with others. Hierarchy is “a variable defined by the authority of the ruler over an increasing number of actions of the ruled” (Lake 2009: 62).

Goh argues that hierarchical systems of states “may map directly from the distribution of power or capabilities” but is ultimately a “layered rank order of major states, rather than [a] polarity which only takes into account the number of preponderant states” (2008: 356-57). Such relationships are social relationships that must be substantiated and maintained by “hierarchical assurance on the part of the dominant state, and hierarchical deference on the part of subordinate states” (Goh 2008: 358). Hierarchical relations understand the unequal situations between states and are consented to by the parties involved. Hobson and Sharman identify hierarchy in international relations as “a relationship between two (or more) actors whereby one is entitled to command and the other is obligated to obey, and this relationship is recognized as right and legitimate by each” (2005: 69-70). Distinct from an anarchical system of states wherein no actor is required to command or obey, hierarchical relationships account for the many variations of military and economic strength across states. Thus, when examining the relational measures of authority between states one examines the observable behaviours of states and not the institutions of states to determine their role in the hierarchy of states.

Of particular importance here are the security relationships between states. Clapton argues that there is a “new social logic of risk [that] underpins contemporary hierarchical relationships within international society” (2014: 28). As the first chapter presented, risks are the anticipations of future events based on the subjective perceptions and often the imaginations of social actors. Based on this understanding of risk, contemporary hierarchies are “essentially a package of norms and ideas that [provide] a cognitive framework for ascribing risk and determining appropriate responses to them” (Clapton 2014: 35). Modern risk society places specific focus on de-bounded risks managed through preventative strategies to avoid catastrophic consequences. Because these risks are “placed” within sovereign states, that sovereignty itself becomes contingent on a state’s ability to control that risk. And, as Mitchell rightfully points out, phrases such as these “are implicated in the formation of new subjectivities, as well as new practices and relations of power” (2010: 295). When the practical sovereignty of a state becomes a risk for other states, hierarchical relationships are created, reinforced, and reformulated in order to fill the gaps of the Western security experience.

The Western Way of War

Generally coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Shaw argues that the international system has come to be dominated by the ‘Western way of war’ (2005). For Shaw, this new mode of warfare between states and subgroups has been grounded by a “different general relationship between warfighting and the political, economic and cultural-ideological domains” (2005: 55). Shaw distinguishes between total war and global war to add emphasis to the place of war in contemporary society. Total war centred state discourses on the conflict it was a part of. Industrialized warfare “came to structure economy, polity and culture, and ... to dominate them and override economic, political and cultural logics” (Shaw 2005: 43).

Contrasted with total war, global war is “generally subordinate to economy, polity and culture” (Shaw 2005: 55). Rather than dominate discourses, global war “must nestle in the interstices” of states who “must make war work in political, economic and cultural as well as strictly military terms” (Shaw 2005: 55). This is to say that war must coincide with the needs and will of society rather than dictate how a society creates industry and social relationships.

Such a mode of war has meant that “armed conflicts worldwide were increasingly subject to a multi-layered system of political surveillance: by the USA and other Western states, in the UN, and through the prism of international law” (Shaw 2005: 56). Conflicts have been held to greater scrutiny, with cognizant publics, states, and international institutions evaluating the intents and effectiveness of conflicts. As a result, Shaw argues, this conception of war is centred on “political risks that governments take: ultimately wars must not undermine, and should preferably strengthen, their domestic political and especially electoral situations” (Shaw 2005: 94). Thus, wars have become an exercise of systematic risk transfer, wherein the risks experienced by governments are transferred onto the military, who in an effort to minimize their own combatants transfer risk onto civilian non-combatants (Shaw 2005: 94). While this appears to be a contradiction with a surveillance apparatus, it is important to remember the sociological construction of risk that appears in the first chapter. Risk, as a social construct, is the emphasis placed on social phenomena experienced by particular social actors. So, where Western culture demands a high standard of civilian protection, the value ascribed to their lives “by virtue of their location in war zones as well as perceived cultural differences” make them less valuable than the lives of Western soldiers (Shaw 2005: 97).

So, while the Western way of war can be defined in the political terms outlined above, so too can it be outlined in technological terms. In rejection of the idea of soldiers as ‘cannon

fodder', there has been an enhanced concern to protect Western soldiers' lives (Shaw 2002: 12). This has led to an operational style in which airpower has become the weapon of choice for American statecraft (Shaw 2005: 35). The ability to employ weapons against an adversary without suffering losses became paramount, and American airpower could operate nearly flawlessly. Civilian casualties are still important, but are comparatively of lower concern. Shaw points out that "risks to civilians [are] reduced not as far as practically possible, but as far as judged necessary to avoid adverse global media coverage" (2002: 11). American technological prowess has routinized the precision of their airpower to incredible historical standards. But, while the care taken for civilians is still apparent, it is undermined by policy that puts them at risk compared to other means (Shaw 2002: 11).

As the analysis presented here notes, the historical record of the United States and other Western nations demonstrates their reliance on airpower and risk-transfer militarism since at least the end of the Cold War and even as far back as World War II. Enhanced by the new international sovereignty regime as well as desire to reduce Western casualties, the Western way of war utilizes airpower extensively to satisfy its security goals. Thinking about drones in a modern context appears to be anti-climactic, then. If drones are a continuation of an on-going practice of risk-transfer militarism, then what unique effects do they have on the ways in which one can think about the spatial aspects of modern conflict? Neocleous argues that thinking about airpower in such an historical way "[encourages] people to think of air power either in purely military and usually quite conservative terms ... or in purely ethical and usually quite liberal terms" (2015: 165). The problem, he argues, is that such thinking tends to reduce airpower to its strategy, rather than its political goal of policing and ordering weaker states.

Air power as Police power

Drones are a combination of new technology with an old purpose: “a new surveillance and killing system with capabilities previously not offered by conventional air power, coupled with an older cosmic view of air mastery through technological speed, verticality, and vision” (Wall and Monahan 2011: 241). Indeed, drones are demonstrably a continuation of the need to reduce the risk to one’s own military through the use of airpower. But what can we understand about the implications of the dominance afforded through air power? That is, what does the use of drones tell us about the power relationships that exist across space and between territorial actors? In thinking about the battlefield as understood through traditional combat, it becomes evident that drones, as well as airpower in general, demonstrably change one’s conceptual understanding of the battlefield.

One way to think about the battlefield is as a space of exception. That is to say that the battlefield “is the place where killing other human beings ... becomes legal under both domestic and international law” (Megret 2012: 3). Conflict in war is distinct from randomized violence in that it takes itself away from the rest of society “confining military violence to a confrontation between specialized forces whose operation should minimally disrupt surrounding life” (Megret 2012: 4). So while the laws of warfare regulate the battlefield, they also construct a physical space for conflict to take place. The space of war does not predate the conflicts fought, but “has always been subtly coterminous with them” (Megret 2012: 4). The battlespace then becomes a shared understanding of applicable norms that gain meaning through the recognition of its limits. Problems arise, however, when particular actors erase these limits for their own benefit or attempt to change the norms of the battlespace without the collective recognition of other parties involved.

Indeed, the actions of the United States since 9/11 have been challenging the accepted practice of combat operations with regards to the battlespace. In many cases, Megret argues, the idea of the battlefield has been used “opportunistically as a familiar trope reinforcing the sense that an actual war is going on, thus legitimizing the use of force in certain contexts” (2012: 15). In its vague terminology, the “War on Terror” has created the notion of a global battlefield that removes the importance of the constructed physical space of war and the exceptional state of violence found within it. In the fight against non-state actors “the zone of armed conflict ... tends ideally to be reduced to the body of the enemy or prey” (Chamayou 2015: 56, emphasis in original). This is to say that the body of the individual has become the battlefield. And, as Gregory notes, “this amounts to a concerted project to transform one of the central registers of the imaginary of war into the individuation of killing” (2014: 11). This individuation of combat is particularly important in the case of drone strikes, which track individuals and determine targets based on pattern-of-life analysis. The result is a differentiated political subjectivity wherein the enemy, once thought of as a representative of the state or collective body, becomes a criminal to be apprehended or eliminated. Furthermore, a terror suspect as conceived by the Obama administration “can embroil additional states in the conflict merely by crossing state lines and bringing the permissive rules of armed conflict along with him” (Daskal 2013: 1180). Drones under the Obama administration appear to change the foundations of the norms that define the boundaries of the battlefield.

Returning to the previous discussion of Foucauldian philosophy in international relations, one recalls that sovereign power exists in a paradox wherein it creates agency for populations who exercise power while denying it to those who act against it. Not only does the state do this internally by granting exceptional powers to police forces, but it also does it externally in the

promotion of military goals. Neocleous notes that such “international relations and political geography wants to somehow retain, albeit for different political purposes, police and war as distinct practices” (2015: 175). That is, in a comparison of the different uses of UAVs in North America and the Middle East, drones perform similarly. On the one hand, drones are used to provide surveillance for inaccessible territories in Pakistan while simultaneously used as information gathering tools in emergency and criminal situations in North America (Wall and Monahan 2011). While many view this as the 'militarisation' of policing, Neocleous argues that “air power has always been police power” (2015: 177). Where one can view drones as part of the American military apparatus, one should also recognize that contemporary “war' is no longer a discrete or distinct event but instead a complex assemblage of exceptionality and normalcy, of the political and the apolitical” (Holmqvist et al 2015: 11).

Viewing air power from a wider historical perspective shows that “there are no civilian spaces, and there are no civilians; the only logic is a police logic” (Neocleous 2015: 178). This conceptualization has important implications for the physical space in which combat takes place. So, while Gregory notes that drones have created a sense of “the everywhere war”, it is important to remember that they will still be a somewhere war (2014: 15). Combat between aggressors must take place in a particular space and time, but defining the space and time of modern conflict has been problematic. Many aspects of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) create “a paradigm for understanding the parameters of the zone of combat that other legal frameworks – such as human rights or domestic criminal law – cannot necessarily offer ... “ (Blank 2010: 8-9). Blank offers the example of neutrality law that creates “an uncontestable framework for where and when hostilities can be conducted” (2010: 9). Neutrality law limits the boundaries of where a conflict cannot take place so as to keep the number of hostilities down and keep the impacts of

the conflict away from non-combatants (Blank 2010: 9). Such limits on combat creates a certain paradigm through which to think of territory. For Elden, thinking of combat in a particular space creates the idea that territory is two-dimensional with defined limits that can be chartered and conquered (2009: xviii). However, without territorial limits to conflict and a predominant shift towards airpower and techniques of risk management, the normative frameworks for thinking about combatant immunity and sovereign rights are undermined and re-formed.

The individualization of war has important implications on the outlook for future combat. While criminal behaviour is normally dealt with by the state, the use of force by an outside actor will “have the effect of weakening the importance of state sovereignty as a defining part of the international legal order” (Blank 2010: 27). If sovereignty produces a sense of agency for populations, then violations of that sovereignty reduce and limit the capabilities that those possessing it experience. Rather than dismiss the relationship between physical space and sovereignty, the concept of sovereignty itself has changed. The need to “place” the enemy in the war against terror became state-centric as the distinction between those committing an act of terror and their spatial location collapsed (Elden 2009: 4). Elden argues that sovereignty became both a privilege and a liability: “a privilege for dominant powers who invoke it as a legitimization for self-defense; a liability for states that have non-state actors operating within their boundaries” (2009: 3). Sovereignty becomes a contingency created by those who dictate the realm of security. States that fail to “play by the security rules we hold dear ... require intervention” (Elden 2009: 23). While sovereignty appears to be a less important concept, it is not eliminated from the international legal order. A new sort of relationship is making itself apparent, one based on a hierarchy of states guided by the Western way of war.

Grayson argues that acts of violence are always a communicative action (2012: 125). Targeting killing focuses on the traits of the individual killed, highlighting their ascribed status as an illegitimate political subject. While the victims of drone strikes surely suffer, they are by no means the only ones targeted. Drone strikes “rest on the preservation of those who can bear witness ..., mourn, remember and, most importantly, learn to abide by the desires of the targeting party” (Grayson 2012: 15). Targeted killing is thus a form of symbolic communication that “attempts to alter the behaviour of populations in ways that will make them more amenable to governance” by imposing political subjectivities selected for elimination (Grayson 2012: 126). Technologies of surveillance that label some as 'tracked' and others as 'collateral damage' has the effect of constructing or producing populations (Holmqvist 2013: 547). For Holmqvist, this is a form of strategic communication that “instructs the verbal stratification of populations in theatres of operation according to how receptive they are believed to be to the message communicated by the intervening forces” (2013: 547). As a method of communication, drones create roles within the hierarchy of international actors, namely those of “the managers”, “the managed,” and “the targets”. Thus, the construction of populations in contemporary conflicts is both discursive and material: “the discursive construction of populations into audiences/targets is matched by the material realities and agentic capacities of surveillant and other automated weapons systems” (Holmqvist 2013: 548). In other words, drones create particular power relations wherein Western states become managers and the targeted populations become subject to this expression of power. Not only are targeted persons eliminated, but the presence of drones signals to the entirety of the population that their actions need to conform to a standard imposed upon them.

Living Under Drones

The frontiers on which drone strikes take place are not merely a place of war, but also “one of commercial, cultural, and intellectual exchange linked to global flows of people, commodities, and ideas” (Bashir and Crews 2012: 5). Despite the rich and developed social history developed independently in the region, the people who live there “seem to become historical subjects only when acted upon by outsiders” (Bashir and Crews 2012: 2). This portrayal suggests that without intervention, Middle-Easterners would be stuck in a barbaric environment that would eventually come to overtake the West. Chapter 2 argued that the Obama administration has actively been avoiding such a conceptualization of the Middle East through their 'Smart power' strategy. But, as the analysis above argues, air power remains as a tool encouraging conformity to Western presence. So the smart-power strategy exists in a paradox of sorts, caught between a struggle to conquer backwards terrorists with modern technology but also a humanitarian and political struggle to win the 'hearts and minds' of local populations (Bashir and Crews 2012: 6).

Just as guerrilla warfare relies on a local population to support them, so too does counterinsurgency warfare. In both cases, the strategic aim is to convince the local population of one's cause in order to “marginalize the enemy and deny it is popular base” (Chamayou 2015: 66). In counterinsurgency practice, Kilcullen argues, “the perception of the action and its political results are more important than tactical successes on the field of battle” (2010: 118). That is to say it is not necessarily the success of operations that matter, but rather the perceived political effects on the local population. If success of counterinsurgency is measured by political perception, drones are surely unsuccessful. According to Grare, as much as 72% of the Pakistani public has a negative opinion of the American government while only 11% have a positive view (2013: 993). So, while drones effectively achieve the goals of the American government in

eliminating terrorists, they appear to fail to 'win hearts and minds' of the population over which they watch. The extent to which drones are a counter-terror tool then are questionable. In fact, if counterinsurgency is a politico-military strategy, then the Obama administration is administering an anti-terror strategy that is more oriented towards policing and security (Chamayou 2015: 68). Targets, from the anti-terrorism perspective, are treated as criminals rather than soldiers. Furthermore, anti-terrorism creates a binary between good and evil that eliminates the possibility of compromise, diplomatic action or agreements from a conflict (Chamayou 2015: 69). The shift from counterinsurgency operations to those of anti-terror “abandons any real analysis of the roots of hostility and its own effects upon it” (Chamayou 2015: 68).

What has been absent from the Obama administration is an explanation of how targets are selected and what it is that makes one a potential target. Leon Panetta, former Secretary of Defense and Director of the CIA, has argued that “the president ... needs a range of tools to defend the nation, and secrecy is one of those tools” (Panetta 2014: 389). Keeping the process of identifying targets is valuable: it ensures that the perception of a target is not limited to tropes that can be avoided by those trying to carry out attacks. In the place of sharing their policy on identifying targets, the administration promises “the checks and balances of our government ensured that these operations were subjected to appropriate scrutiny while still keeping details out of the hands of our enemies” (Panetta 2014: 390). Obama has reiterated that his administration “has worked vigorously to establish a framework that governs our use of force against terrorists – insisting upon clear guidelines, oversight, and accountability” that are used in drone strikes (Obama 23 May 2013). Harold Koh indicated that the United States’ “procedures and practices for identifying lawful targets are extremely robust” and that the principles of distinction and proportionality are “implemented rigorously throughout the planning and

execution of lethal operations to ensure that such operations are conducted in accordance with all applicable law” (Koh 2010). From this perspective, the United States is restrained by international law and is a participant in the global community by following the limits imposed by that community.

This perspective, however, fails to acknowledge how these discourses “[prioritize and mobilize] the law as an active player in the war on terror” (Morrissey 2011: 14-15). Morrissey argues that the “it is lawfare that facilitates what Foucault calls the biopolitics of security” – enabling the United States’ military to eliminate threats to ‘life’ and create the operational capabilities to ‘make live’, all while anticipating and managing life’s uncertain ‘future’ (Morrissey 2011: 23). According to Grayson, “a credible – though not necessarily convincing – legal defence for [counterinsurgency practice] can be provided in many cases” (Grayson 2012: 122). The same legal framework that the Obama administration claims limits their drone strikes in fact builds the foundation of the drone program and is used to justify the strikes rather than criticize them. So while international or domestic laws might be intended to protect individuals, they can in fact be used to undermine the very protections they are meant to promise.

Bashir and Crews argue that the Obama administration's strategy in the Middle East “has rested on the insistence that these populations remain loyal or at least apolitical” (2012: 7). In responding to questions about drones in Pakistan, Hillary Clinton remarked that “too many leaders of the Pakistani military and intelligence services were obsessed with India and either turning a blind eye to the Taliban insurgency” or aiding other affiliated organizations (2014: 186). While Clinton's answer was mostly unsatisfactory, it sheds light on the American attitude towards Pakistan: if Pakistan is not going to take care of its or America's security concerns, then the United States will. Furthermore, this attitude makes other aspects of diplomacy, such as

humanitarian assistance or development funding, contingent on whether or not they meet the American-imposed definition of 'secure'. Clinton remarked that it's Pakistan's burden to make hard choices about “what kind of country they [want] to live in and what they [are] willing to do to secure it” while only presenting the binary of accepting or denying American security proposals (Clinton 2014: 186). Indeed, living under drones is to live under imposed discipline with very little sovereign choice.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the role of drones in the broader spectrum of contemporary conflict. Rather than find a causal relationship between drones and their effects on populations, it has argued that, like all forms of airpower, drones are a form of policing through control. In their attempts to defeat al-Qaeda in so-called ‘risky’ states, the United States has objectified those under the gaze of drones. Thus, rather than create a distinct engagement with the Middle East different than President Bush, the Obama administration has continued the morbid tradition of objectifying the population through the discourse of risk and aerial subordination. The result has been a reinforcement of a sovereign hierarchy that places the United States at the penultimate point. Furthermore, the very discourses that are used to criticize and attempt to overcome the use of drones are the same ones used by the Obama administration to justify drone strikes. These justifications further limit legitimate complaints against hierarchical subordination and further silence victims and those opposed to drone strikes.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the role of drones in contemporary security practices. First, the thesis established that security can be understood through Foucault's notion of the biopolitical. Rather than a strict centering of security on the state apparatus and sovereign power, biopolitical security concerns the protection of the population and its way of life. As such, it seeks to create and maintain a sense of identity and way of life that needs to be protected from outside forces seeking its destruction. Consequently, state security forces seek to identify this "otherness" through predictive and pre-emptive security apparatuses. Through this biopolitical understanding of security, Chapter 2 sought to answer how drones came to prominence under the Obama administration and the implications of their continued use on the states and populations that fall under their gaze. The Obama administration understood that under President Bush the United States' relationship with the international community and their reputation as the moral force for good had proven too costly. Obama sought to implement a 'smart power' strategy that sought respect for democracies that were growing and a promise to relieve tensions in the Middle East by recognizing state autonomy. The discourses of risk that the Obama administration presented were focused on eliminating al-Qaeda as an organization while acknowledging that "terrorism" could not conceptually be defeated. Obama reiterated that not following international norms and bypassing recognized international standards further harmed the United States' relationship with emerging and powerful states. This conceptualization of risk contributed to the development of the drone program: drones allowed the United States to have a military presence in "risky" areas while also relying less on a negatively-perceived "boots on the ground" approach.

However, the Obama administration's use of "lawfare" to justify drone strikes undermines the values articulated in their smart-power foreign policy. Chapter 3 argued that the ramifications of drone strikes do little to empower or engage meaningfully with Middle Eastern states. Rather, the continued use of drones reasserts American dominance over risky, less-than-sovereign states. Drones, as both weapons and communicative technologies, are the latest in a line of airpower weaponry that seek to police foreign territory through observation and punishment. Where smart-power seeks to empower Middle Eastern populations and recognize the agency of sovereign states in the region, drones undermine the capacity for these states to police within their borders and disrupt terrorist organizations themselves. Furthermore, the international laws and protections that victims of drones and those who find themselves under their gaze are used to further legitimize the use of drones. Where international institutions promise to respect the sovereign status of less capable states, the Obama administration's use of their guiding principles to justify drones undermines the protections that the institutions offer. Thus, the United States continues to set the standard of international security norms despite the Obama Administration's discourses of more respectful engagement.

Drone Materialities

The analysis of drones above presents the technology as more than objects used by politically-motivated actors. Rather than purely objects of American 'smart-power' or anti-terror technology, drones are material elements of broader assemblages of power, social relationships, and representations of territory and space. Drones are used, but were not created, by the Obama administration to fight al-Qaeda in remote areas and to gather information and insight into the operations and actions of suspected terrorists. As objects, drones have come to be valued as one aspect of the solution to fighting terror in the Middle East.

At the same time, many state governments have become enamoured with the capabilities of drones. The overwhelming majority of states that are developing drones are years away from reaching American drone capacity but are “willing to invest the necessary time and money ... because drones are increasingly seen as an integral part of modern warfare” (Bergen and Rowland 2015: 300). Companies, research institutes, and non-state actors are also rapidly developing and implementing drone technology to meet the demand that the public and security regimes are placing on them (Bergen and Rowland 2015: 303). Drones are not simply the product of socio-technological assemblages. Miller asserts that “material forms have consequences for people that are autonomous from human agency” (2005: 11). That is to say that objects possess the agency that causes the effects they create (Miller 2005: 11). Where the United States use drones to reinforce their hierarchical position in relation to risky states, other states seek out drone technology in order to protect or raise their social status. Indeed, drones are not only the end result of innovation in security technology, but they are actively informing and changing the approaches to security that states undertake. Drones should be understood as more than the result of technological innovation, but as active elements that change the way states interact with one another.

The value placed on developing drone technology is important because of the ramifications that drones have on individuals and groups within the ‘risky’ areas that they are used and the power relationships they create and reinforce. States that seek to build drones, armed or not, are continuing the tradition of dominance over ‘risky’ states because of the perceived value that drones maintain control through aerial domination. The use of drones creates a sense of information-dominance and the ability to eliminate potential enemies beyond those defined by the United States. The technology promises a sense of order and elimination of

risk from uncontrolled areas and dangerous groups. However, such discourses are “typically based on the capacities, authority and expertise of external actors, rather than those being acted upon” (Holmqvist et al 2015: 8). Drones empower actors to communicate and enforce particular ‘truths’ through control, and the very presence of drones in a state’s infrastructure legitimizes their power and helps their ‘truth’ to endure.

Drones contribute to what Holmqvist calls the “*unspatiality* of contemporary political relations” (2012: 234). Many aspects of relations between states rely on the ability to establish and protect boundaries between nations. In the practice of using drones to police risky populations, drones contribute to the continuing practice that removes the obligations associated with territory. With the rise of new, non-spatial based threats like the Islamic State, Western states view their actions as non-political conflicts against criminal threats. For Holmqvist, the de-bounding of risk “allows for the normalisation of war in our political understanding” and “constitutes an unwillingness to engage with the phenomenon of war itself” (2012: 234). Where war has many unique and controversial political aspects that generally must be approved by appropriate legislative bodies, the de-spatialization of war and globalization of risk permits a simpler and less political approach to conflict. Where drones do not uniquely change the formulation of conflict, they are elements of a much broader assemblage of contemporary state approaches to policing and war.

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